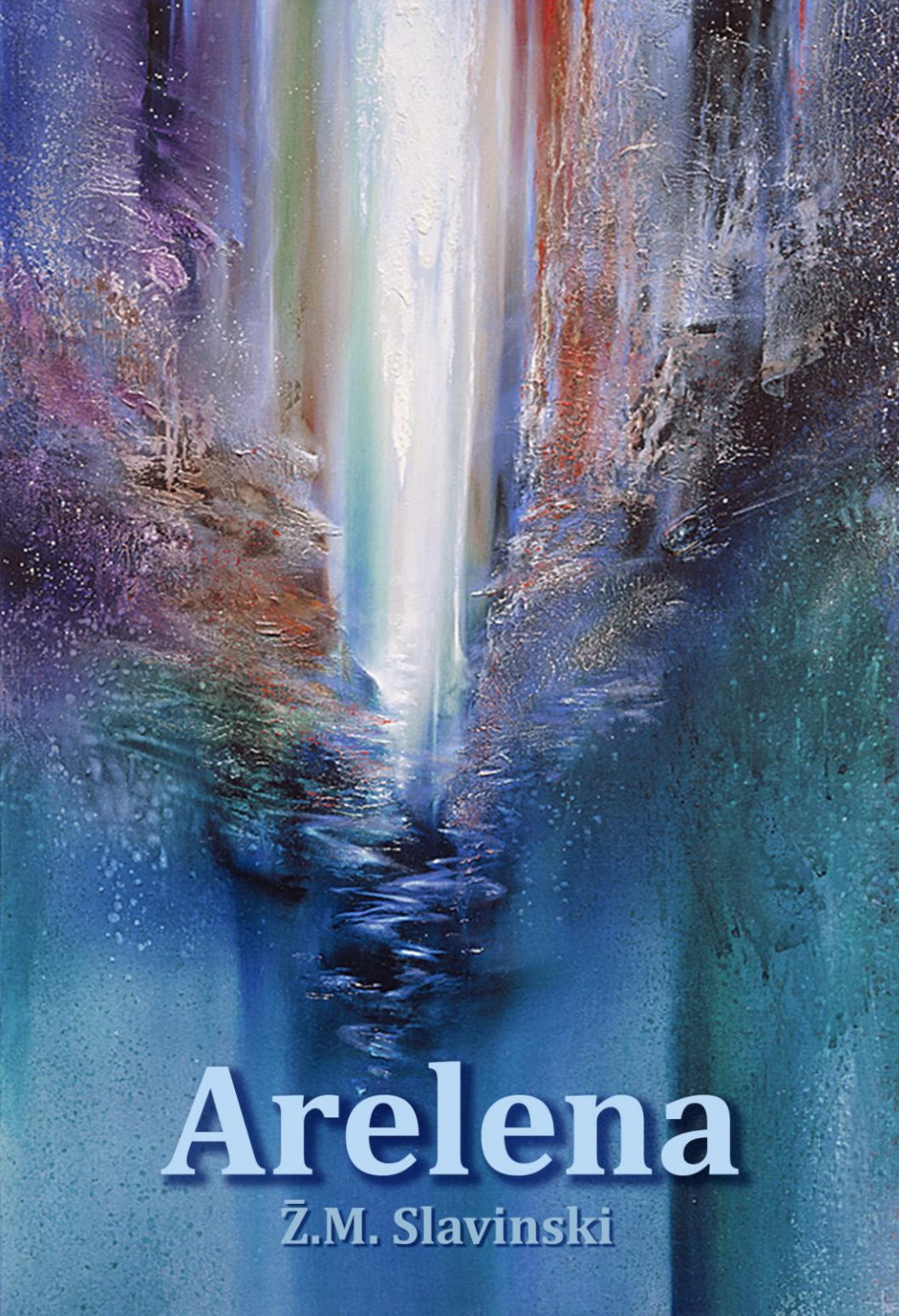
Arelena
Ž.M. Slavinski

ARELENA

A Novel

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A R E L E N A

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PART ONE

1

I came to the sudden realization that I had to create and direct a play which the world had not yet seen. I don't know where this thought, conviction, compulsion came from…I don't know what to call it, but it was there immediately. It didn't evolve gradually, but rose up in me as though cast from a single slab of stone. I didn't know what it would be about, or what sort of characters I'd create, when and where it would take place, nothing… nothing. All I knew was that I had to write and direct it so as to satisfy myself first, and then the whole world.

When I started to rewind the thoughts which were swarming chaotically through my mind, I tried to consider all of the elements calmly and come to a sensible plan of how to carry it through. First I had to write a play and, at that moment, I didn't have a single word on paper. That didn't deter me. All I needed was one basic idea. As soon as I'd found that, I knew everything else would fall into place.

Who would let me direct anything in the theatre? I'd spent half a year studying directing at the Academy, then I left it for medicine. My parents welcomed that saying that I should do something I could live off, and not just roam around the town with some bearded losers. I had to admit to myself honestly that I was a directing drop-out, and such people aren't given the chance to direct regardless of how magnificent their ideas might be. However, the compulsion in me to do that was extremely strong, almost tangible, and I couldn't dispel such thoughts. They had an overwhelming

power. Of course, I thought this was some sort of fixation, an obsession, some form of madness, but that thought didn't help either.

I rejected the idea of a classical drama without a second thought. There was no room here for Stanislavski, or for his many successors. My thoughts for the moment were entrenched in Antonin Artaud and his theatre of cruelty. Although he was mad, he deserved to be called a genius. The individual consciousness and collective unconsciousness, the spectator and actor, dream and awareness, life and death were all joined in his theatre. I wanted to go one step further, to be actively present as a director, to involve the audience in the drama by merging with the actors and the spectators, directing the drama so that I was part of it. The actors and director would physically merge with the audience and in that way eliminate the boundary between them. There would be no border between theatre and reality. They would all fuse into a paratheatre which aspires to penetrate the core of the big issues of existence and disappearance.

That could have been the beginning, but I wanted to go even further so that when watching my play the audience would recoil before its power and energy which would boil over and spill out from the stage making the spectators confused, shaken up, with their thoughts and feelings swirling around in their minds and hearts. I wanted them to acquire a new worldview, of other people and themselves, so that years after my premiere they would say – since that play my life has never been the same.

Along with this feeling of compulsion that I must write and direct my play, fear emerged somewhere from the depths of my inner being, from the abyss, growing in strength as it journeyed toward the surface. This fear did not stem from my feelings of incompetence, ignorance or inability to achieve this seemingly impossible task, but

from the feeling of intimidation which existed in me like some sort of foreign body, like a dark shadow which appeared whenever I wanted to undertake something significant. I had experienced this feeling in similar situations many times, so I knew it well, but that didn't make it any less unpleasant. It first started to make itself known after I had my operation in hospital, and acted with inhuman persistence and regularity, like in a chess game. Each of my ideas connected with spiritual development or improvement of any kind, and those were my white figures, was followed by a counterattack from the black ones. I finally concluded, although without strong conviction, that the fear of death which kept life energy in balance was evolving in me.

2

The phone rang late at night. “It’s Viktor.”

He needn’t have introduced himself; I recognised his voice even thought there was compressed energy in it this time.

“How was it?”

“That can’t be explained over the phone. These are cosmic states which exceed the imagination! We have to see each other.”

Three months ago Viktor had gone for illumination training at the Essen School in Barcelona. As always, he’d expected his whole life to take a turn for the better, to find the answers to all questions, and for everything to become clear. After his departure, I read two books and a few articles about illumination and gained some theoretical knowledge about it.

At the end of 20th century Illuminism was created by a man whose mystic name was Nemo, a well-known archaeologist and researcher of Mayan civilisation before he dived into the waters of the occult. The group of people gathered around him were mostly Americans, but also included some disappointed members of other mystical groups and Latinos who lived in Europe. That was undoubtedly a cult with a leader who persuaded his followers that he knew the formula for the transformation of the human mind. According to the people who were in contact with him, Nemo was very charismatic and confident, with

messianic feelings and the power to show people how to find their way and achieve the vision of eternity.

In his teachings the link between modern science and ancient teachings, myths and legends in which he had discovered those components inaccessible to the uninitiated was obvious. He initiated the members of his group into their true meaning. He was inspired by Alfred Korzybski's view that a group which wants to separate from society has to create its own language. Truly, the language of illuminism sounded to me like the terminology of a newly established science, with numerous abbreviations, the frequent use of numbers and strange terms.

Psychological magazines presented unfounded comments that the Essen School was a sect,which you had to reject because of its value orientation. Sects are often associated with apocalyptical pessimism, while illuminism was optimistic and evolutionarily directed – a better world awaits humankind and their teaching is the only way to achieve it. In Nemo's texts which I read, modern history was presented as a race between the nuclear disaster of humanity and the achievement of spiritual freedom through illuminism.

I'd seen reactions like Victor's several times before and, to be honest, had also experienced them myself. Uncritical delight at the beginning, a solution to all of life's problems... Those are childhood illnesses of the spirit. Nevertheless, he did unnerve me. I felt those familiar butterflies in the plexus, pressure in the ears and bodily tension which forced me into motion. I wanted to hear the direct experience of an intelligent man of great knowledge and personal culture.

We met in a café in the city centre. Viktor seemed as fresh as a daisy. From being chubby and middle-aged he had turned into a dashing young man in his mid-thirties.

He'd lost two stone, but the skin on his face was smooth, tight on his forehead, and the wrinkles which had started to appear a few years ago had disappeared. Medium height, slim, with an elongated face which used to be round, and full lips. He was very close to the image of Renaissance man, a walking encyclopaedia. He knows a lot of historical facts about ancient Greek philosophers, the Habsburg Monarchy and the gossip about its members, about Kafka, Freud, Adler, Jung, about the Blue Rider School of Art and other people who make up the essence of Central Europe. A hedonist, he knew about wine, and Chinese, Italian and French cuisine. When he sat in a restaurant, he would study the menu for a long time and focus on it as though it were a book of poetry. He could talk interestingly about the skin of beautiful women, classical music and Greek monasteries on Athos. He was part of the old guard, and you don't often come across such types these days. At the same time he was obsessed with magical painting, primitive art, directed towards everything metaphysical and irrational.

He got divorced a few years ago and had been living with his elderly mother since then even though he had his own flat. When he wasn't reading or writing, he'd sit in the armchair in front of the television and his mother would pass him a plate of meat or cheese pies she made for him every hour or two. At that time he put on a lot of weight, and his mother used to say that he was building himself up. One afternoon when I came for a visit, she opened the door with a happy face and told me: "You know Filip, Viktor ate so well today."

So it was strange for such a hedonist to become so involved in the cult of a man who considered himself a messiah.

"You look well", I said. "Tell me all about what happened."

"I could write a novel about it. In short, my whole life has changed. Nemo's a genius, a miracle worker. He doesn't belong to our time, it's as though he was from Plato's Academy."

"What was it that affected you so much? Him as a person, or his teaching? You have to admit, it seems a bit like science fiction."

He leaned over the table towards me. "It's not about mystical influence, even though that can't be ignored, but about something crucial, human, when somebody's mere presence influences your further spiritual and life path. And those two paths, in my case, have fused into one."

That wasn't what I wanted to hear. For me that was a nicely articulated, but generalised statement. I'd heard and read so many of them from the New Age representatives. That's all you can get from them. There were no details there to explain what had happened. "Viktor", I said trying to supress my impatience, "tell me exactly what happened."

"Destiny pushed me towards that experience. I'd fallen into a crisis and after only seven or eight days, I wanted to leave the Essen School. I'd taken all my luggage down the hallway, when Nemo appeared on the opposite side. I wanted to avoid meeting him, so I went into the caretaker's room where they kept the brooms and cloths for cleaning, but he stopped in front of it and started talking with a man. I didn't understood what they were talking about because I don't speak Spanish. This conversation went on for a long time and, after a while, I sat down. I closed my eyes and was sitting, it seemed to me, without a thought in my mind. When I opened my eyes the whole room was much lighter, as though somebody had opened a blacked-out window. It was as though the light wanted to embrace all of me. Suddenly I felt filled with an indescribable joy, a feeling of oneness and bliss. There was

no difference between me and any other person or thing. All boundaries had disappeared."

While Viktor was talking his eyes were fixed somewhere in the distance, they became moist and his mouth started to quiver. "I don't know how long I sat there completely fascinated and unable to move. But I do remember the anxiety which took over when my feelings started to fade and disappear. I began to think about how such a pervasive and moving vision could disappear so quickly, and how I'd be able to describe it to someone else, since I felt that I had no words to describe such a miraculous experience."

I was watching him silently and intently, waiting for him to tell me something even more significant. His experience was packed with genuinely powerful energy.

"I stayed at the school. Nemo made me realise that just because of professional obligations and my interest in art I don't have the right to reject that divinity which was so generous to me – the divinity of truth. Before meeting him I had mostly behaved like a blood-brother to my spiritual experiences. Now I'd turned into their Siamese twin." He cleared his throat and continued: "He achieved that without many words, just with his existence. Hindus call that darshan. He has the acute power to enter the souls of his pupils, to open them up like fans and perceive their deepest hopes and fears. That happened to me, and to many I talked to."

"That sounds nice, I admit, but what do his teachings come down to? Which specific methods does he use?"

"I wouldn't like to get into his methods. It's impossible to understand them without having experienced them first hand. If this hadn't happened to me, I would never have set out into the world with open eyes. My life would have been a series of postponements and dreams

about what I could have done. Now I know that today is the first day of the rest of my life and I want to use it wisely. I felt fulfilment and a sense of purpose in my life. You were right when you said that his methods seem like science fiction. But that's a type of fiction which encompasses the deepest essence of the human being and the cosmos."

"So what you mean to say is that if I took this path I'd find out what is happening on other planets?"

"Don't be so primitive!", he said nervously. "You won't know whether there is water on Jupiter, but you'll intuitively understand its essence. Jupiter and the whole cosmos are huge, a unique consciousness." He leaned over the table and placed his chin on his fist. He looked straight at me for a few moments, and said: "You see, I used to perceive people in a certain way, but always separate from myself. Now... when I focus on you, I see myself. And that happens to me with everyone. It may seem strange, but all this time I've been talking to myself."

I was about to say that many schizophrenics do that, but the power shining from his eyes stopped me. I could see tears in his eyes. These were not fake, learned, sick thoughts he was expressing, he was talking from deep within himself and had left nothing out and that could be felt unmistakeably.

He lent closer to me and continued: "Find some money, get packed and go to Barcelona. Nemo is there with most of his close associates."

I sat back in my chair. "Seeking the truth is also possible in this room too", I said. "That's our refusal to accept limits and their transcendence. That's how we expand the world within us and around us; we refuse to see the prison in it."

He probably noticed my withdrawal, smiled broadly and said: "Leave your intellectualisations for somebody

else. I know you. You've been looking for that your entire life, just like me. Nobody can do it instead of you. It's not the same to meditate in an armchair and be given the darshan from Nemo. The wall which separates you from the truth is no thicker than a hair."

"You might be right, but... for a long time now I've been haunted by an idea or obsession... I don't know what to call it, to create an avant-garde drama the world has never seen before. I'm only telling you, I don't want to become an object of ridicule."

He didn't show any surprise that a man such as myself without any experience in the theatre wanted to take on such a grandiose task. With a surge of energy he blurted out: "There's no better material for such a play then contact with Nemo's teaching and the people around him. Don't hesitate! Time which has gone, is gone forever."

3

My conversation with Viktor had unsettled me. He hadn't given me the concrete information I was hoping for, but instead had succeeded in reaching the dark depths within me, stirring up issues which I believed had been settled a long time ago.

I wasn't satisfied with my profession. Being a doctor had seemed promising in my youth, but achieving that goal had proved to be like eating sour grapes. Ten years after graduation, I finally bid medicine farewell. I'd never really wanted to make diagnoses or treat haemorrhoids or, as a surgeon, dig around in human bodies like a pig in a farmer's sack. I wanted to transform my hatred into love, fear and suffering into serenity and happiness and to help people do the same. Only that became important. And serenity and happiness are not studied at university, or found in medical text books.

I didn't find a new goal. Although I knew what I didn't want, I didn't know what it was that I wanted. I took a few self-development courses from California which were also well- known in Europe. Some of them were worthwhile, but they failed to live up to the promises their creators made. I acquired the ability to talk about my weaknesses in front of other people, learned to say "no" when required and stopped feeling more worthy when somebody addressed me as "doctor". But what many people talk about, the discovery of the meaning of life and my mission in it, remained lost in the fog. Those who advised others how to find their purpose in life did so

without any real experience. In public and in the presence of their followers, they were all well groomed and wearing clean socks, but left amongst themselves they were scruffy and stank.

I practiced yoga for years. I learned to breathe correctly and deeply, my spine was more flexible than in my younger days and my concentration slightly better. But there was no higher state of consciousness, the cosmos didn't open up to me, and I could only see chakras in my imagination. I was often depressed, I felt like a mobile grave. It was as though my essence was a creature which had been numbed long before being born into this life. I needed to dig it up and revive it. Viktor was right, I needed something more than I was getting from this lifestyle, direct contact with a person who injects true knowledge. I decided to go to Barcelona, but felt hesitation, discomfort and a strange sort of fear. When you make a decision you should jump into the cold water and swim regardless of how afraid you are.

4

The Essen School was in a narrow street near Catalonia Square in Barcelona. At the entrance, in a hallway with bright neon lights, a young man with long hair and freckles was sitting at a table. There was a large colour picture of Nemo on the wall behind him. He smiled and asked: “How can I help you?”

When I told him my name, his smile became even broader as he said: “Oh yes, we were expecting you.” He glanced at the suitcase on wheels which I was pulling along behind me and added: “Your accommodation is on the second floor in the four-bedded room. Your name is on the bed. Manuel will take you there. Have a rest, you can eat in our restaurant and join the group. You can pay this evening.”

The room contained four simple wooden beds lined up in two rows, like in the army. On the second bed, in the row on the right, there was a card with my name on it. I put my suitcase under the bed, took my shoes off and lay down on top of the cover. There was nobody but me in the room. Big vividly coloured yantras were painted on the white ceiling and walls. The wooden floor was clean, and through the recently washed windows you could see the building across the road with its cast iron balconies and dark green climbing plants hanging over the edges.

I fixed my gaze on the yantra painted on the wall in striking colours, a yellow circle on a dark blue square. I stared at its centre for a while. It was supposed to provoke

the expansion of human consciousness, but nothing really happened for a long time. Whenever I closed my eyes, the complementary colours, yellow and blue, would fuse into one another. That was an entertaining phenomenon and I played that game for some time.

Hunger woke me. I'd slept for almost two hours and felt rested. It was time for lunch. The dining room was on the first floor. Two girls wearing green aprons were serving food at the counter in the self-service restaurant. I took a plastic tray from the pile and looked at the food. The meals were mostly made of beetroot, brown rice, cabbage, broccoli and kale. The girl behind the counter was looking at me questioningly. I pointed to the macaroni cheese.

"You're new?"

"Just arrived today."

"Fascinating experiences await you."

"So I've heard."

She gave me a sideways glance with clenched lips. "I don't think you'll be saying that in a week's time."

"If I stay that long", I said and headed for the table in the corner. Apart from me, there were several other people sitting in the dining room at the plastic tables with metal legs. A few of them stared at me. I started to eat. The food in New Age centres is usually insipid. My macaroni wasn't so bad.

"Is it free?", asked a women in her forties who, without waiting for a reply, sat down opposite me. I'd seen the same type of woman on courses in other centres such as Sri Chinmoy's, and Osho Rajneesh's. She had long ginger hair held back in an Indian hairband, and was wearing a loose fitting orange cotton dress. A small beaded bag was slung across her shoulders. She was wearing several bracelets made of wood and glass beads around her wrists,

and her braided necklace had a small photo of Nemo on it. She was tall, slim, verging on skinny, with rough facial skin and no makeup, as often seen in this kind of group.

"So you're new? I'm happy you came. You're in the right place."

"You're the third person to tell me that."

"That's normal; we're all fascinated by what you can experience here in such a short time. There are lots of different spiritual development systems on the planet these days…only illuminism is a harmonious combination of science and mysticism."

I swallowed a bite. I was prepared for a story similar to the one I'd heard from Viktor, about the unique teacher: "Can you tell me more about it?"

She nodded. "It's simple. The fundamental teaching of the Essen School, and that's another name for illuminism, is that man can participate in God's consciousness through spiritual self-transformation. That's the sacred process which the Essen teachers taught their followers. That process presents the secret Gospel which was lost in the official church's ossification, but was rediscovered through our teacher's mystical revelation. It consists of strict disciplines through which the individual comes into contact with God's consciousness in a predictable way. That's the only living theology on the planet."

"Sounds good", I said. "The only problem for me is that I've heard the same thing on several occasions in different places." Several people in the dining room and the women serving the food were looking in our direction as though they were following what was going on.

"You might have heard it, but have you experienced it? I'm sure you haven't, otherwise you wouldn't be here."

Her words rang true. I was wondering what to say to her when a pale young man with long hair and a pointed nose stopped me. He approached our table and addressed me: "You're lucky, this evening the teacher is giving a lecture about modern theatre in the big hall. Your process starts tomorrow at nine. Your processors are Gunter and Carlos. The room you need to go to is written on the information board." He gave me a significant look and added: "Enjoy the process."

The big hall had a light grey cotton carpet. The walls in this room too were covered with vividly coloured yantras and cushions of various sizes were scattered on the floor against the walls. Footwear was removed and placed on the wooden shelves in the hallway. There were around fifty people in the hall, all in their socks and slippers. Most of them were wearing cotton clothing. Some of them had necklaces made of wooden beads with Nemo's photo around their necks. They were sitting cross-legged on cushions. I looked for a chair, but there weren't any in the room. You were supposed to sit on the floor cross- legged, which meant that you had years of practicing hatha yoga behind you. I sat on a soft purple cushion and looked around the room.

I'd been on several similar courses, but there was nobody I knew here. People were talking quietly, turned towards the stage where a cushion and two large speakers had been placed in readiness. The windows were covered with dark blue plush curtains, and light shone from the ceiling and the wall lamps above the yantras which intensified their bright colours.

A tanned Latino with slanted eyes and prominent cheekbones was sitting to my left. He looked at me, nodded and said: "I'm Robinho."

"Nice to meet you." I told him my name and smiled. "This will be an interesting lecture", said the young woman with light blond hair and freckles sitting next to him. "Out teacher is a great expert in avant-garde theatre, as well as theatre originating from the island of Bali." She looked German or Scandinavian. "I'm Kirke." I gave her a forced smile. I was expected to say something; I searched for words, and simply said: "My name is Filip."

The door to the right of the stage opened and two girls in long white dresses entered and announced in high-pitched voices: "The true teacher is coming! The true teacher is coming! The true teacher is coming!" Nemo came in behind them, at ease in his skinny body. He smiled at the audience and raised his hand in greeting. He was of slight build, as you usually expect from spiritual teachers, with a tanned face, and thin hair tied up in a ponytail. He wore linen trousers and a sort of kimono. He made himself comfortable on the big cushion, nodded while scanning the audience and said in a high, piercing voice: "Greetings everyone."

His voice suited his appearance. He cut through the room as though he were slicing it into pieces. His head moved left and right encompassing all the listeners with a wave-like glance. He spoke with short pauses between sentences, thus heightening the impression he wanted to make. He gave a short history of the theatre. Its roots come from ancient Greek mysteries whose aim was not to entertain the audience, but to enable them to recognise their own archetypes in the drama and thus move them towards spiritual development. He briefly mentioned the Theatre of the Absurd and then moved on to Artaud.

"Artaud believed that theatre should exert the greatest possible influence on the audience, which is why he used a combination of strange and disturbing lights on the stage and sounds which blasted out suddenly sending

mild shock waves through the spectators. In the first and second manifesto of his Theatre of Cruelty he expressed his admiration for far-eastern theatre, particularly Balinese." Nemo paused, peering over our heads, as if he were reading a prepared text from the ceiling, and continued: "the reason for his admiration was that eastern theatre has strictly codified and precisely determined dance movements. Artaud did not advocate sadism in the theatre as a goal in itself, as some believe, but as the forceful determination to break down people's feelings of false reality created by life in modern society, in which the unachieved authentic conception of theatre had been distorted. In the theatre of his time the text reigned tyrannically over meaning. Artaud supported the creation of a special theatre language which was supposed to be the fusion of thoughts and gestures."

Nemo paused, raised his right forefinger and continued emphatically: "For Artaud, the theatre is a magical circle of self-discovery, like in the Greek mysteries. Just like as all of us, he confronted the ancient mystical enigma, the dualism of the Ego and the True Self, and transferred that rift to the theatre. He did that by trying to abolish, once and for all, the duality of stage and auditorium as well as that of actors and spectators. He wanted to create a unique space without walls or barriers. Only in that way, he claimed, and he was right, is it possible to achieve direct communion between the audience and the performance, the conscious and the unconscious."

Silence fell on the room like an invisible cloak. I could hear Robinho's breathing next to me. Nemo took a few sips of water, and continued: "Since the spectator will find himself in the middle of the plot and not outside it as before, he will be pulled into it and, in that way become an active participant in its magical circle." He stopped again, took a deep breath so that his skinny chest visibly inflated,

stretched out his open palms towards us and went on: “In such a theatre, the director is a magical ritual master. Pointing out that myth is the secret passage through which cosmic energies impact on human cultural manifestations, he wrote: ‘Creating myths, that is the true subject for theatre, to present life in its universal, boundless form and to take from it the pictures we would like to find ourselves in.”

He radiated such great power when he spoke, as though he were made of steel; his voice was high, penetrating and convincing and you could see before you the auditorium with the actors and spectators mingling together and feel the communion of people with the cosmos. I felt my breathing become shallow and rapid, and my body instinctively leant towards the stage he was sitting on.

“By diving increasingly deeper into the world of magical symbols, Artaud discovered it was better to compare drama with alchemy, which he knew as much about as he did theatre. Between the principles of theatre and those of alchemy there is a deep sameness, Artaud used to say, which enables the physical sphere to attain gold, and in drama enables the complete transformation of actors and spectators.”

“For me, this was completely new. I hadn’t come across anything about the closeness between theatre and alchemy in a single text, but at that moment, that closeness imposed itself upon me. In my youth I was fascinated with alchemy and gold, the only element which is eternal in this variable universe. It isn’t surprising that old alchemists treated it as a symbol of the eternal human soul.”

Nemo closed his eyes, raised his right forefinger and continued: “According to Artaud, both the creator of drama and the alchemist repeat the drama of the creation of the universe out of primordial chaos on a microcosmic level.”

He lowered his voice and spoke very quietly thus creating the impression of confidence: "By carrying out the alchemic operation of participating in drama as an actor or spectator, man witnesses the cosmogonic birth spasm. Those conflicts which the ebullient universe offers us in a philosophically imprecise way, alchemy offers us in its irrefutable intellectuality, because it provides us with the possibility to once again reach the sublime and transcendental after the stormy destruction of each insufficiently clean form. The basic principle of alchemy is not to allow the spirit to soar to higher spheres of consciousness until it has passed through all levels of existing material and carried out the same task from the beginning in the red-hot purgatories of the future."

He paused and nodding his head, sent a sweeping glance around the whole hall. Everyone applauded apart from me. I was fascinated by his lecture. It coincided with my deepest interests. At the same time I was surprised by the last part of his speech and the link he had made between alchemy and theatre. I remembered with gratitude Viktor's words that there is no more valuable material for a truly worthy drama than contact with Nemo and those around him. Nemo's lecture had created the conviction in me that I had to introduce alchemic elements into my play which would trigger the transformation of the participants in the drama from seekers into finders, human lead into spiritual gold. The actors would to have to be taken over by this process. The acting in my play would not be a matter of simply doing a job, however worthy that job may be, but an alchemic operation of the highest order which would transform all those present.

Nemo got up off the cushion with ease and made his way towards the door. He stopped at the door, turned towards the audience and said: "You can stay for a while and talk about this interesting subject or anything else that

may interest you. The lights will be turned off at the usual time."

"What's your impression?", Robinho asked me with a satisfied smile.

"The link between theatre and alchemy was a complete novelty for me."

"That's one of the teacher's most precious characteristics. He is able to perceive new elements in generally known things and relations. As Marcel Proust said, the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing with new eyes."

5

After breakfast, at nine o'clock I found myself in front of the dark green fake leather doors where "Séance room 2 was written". I pushed the small button and heard a muffled bell ring. A man in his forties with thinning hair and blue eyes opened the door. "You must be Filip", he said holding out his hand. "I'm Gunter. Welcome."

Two women were sitting in the room next to the table which looked like a massage table. They gave me a friendly smile. I'd talked to the skinny woman with the Indian hairband in the dining room. The other one, with slanted eyes and high cheekbones, looked like she was from Kalmykia or Kirghizia. Her name was Asha. "We've already met", the skinny woman said. "My name is Tara. Try to relax as much as you can. This is a new experience for most people, so they're usually a bit tense".

The walls were padded with the same fake leather as the door. On the wall to the left of the door, a dim light was coming in through the window covered with a grey curtain. The room was lit from the ceiling. Gunter was sitting at a simple desk with printed papers set out in front of him. "I have to ask you a few simple questions", he said. "OK?"

The questions were formatted like those in psychological tests. Had I suffered from any nervous disorders, epilepsy, or had I ever had a nervous breakdown? What about my parents? What was my religion, was I a vegetarian, did I drink alcohol occasionally, had I tried drugs, did I smoke? At one moment I found it hard to control

myself. In answer to the question: "Are you married", I replied by deliberately dragging the words out: "I'm divorced. Love is blind, and marriage removes the veil from the eyes." He smiled shortly, as though he were just doing his job and continued to question me. At one moment the interview became interesting. Gunter placed a sheet of paper with four circles in primary colours in front of me and said: "Choose the one you like the most."

I pointed to the red circle, to which he said, "Very well", and then went on to place a paper with four coloured triangles in front of me: "Choose one." I chose the red one again. More complex geometrical figures in different colours followed. I'd started to wonder what the point of this test was. "OK", he said, placing the results in a cardboard folder with my name written on it in large letters. "Now, I'll explain what happens next. Be assured that it's completely safe, even though we'll be putting a ring around your head." He pointed at the shelf next to him where there was a metal hoop with several small bulbs on it in various colours. "You see, the ring contains a chip which is the interface between electronics and the human brain. There is no such device in the world apart from here. The sacred ring enables you to harmonise your mind with higher spiritual vibrations. You will achieve in a few days what Zen and yoga practitioners needed months to do. Do you have any questions?"

"Yes. I see that this devise is plugged in. How can I know that there won't be any damaging consequences?"

"Rest assured that there aren't any. You're not the first to go through this process. The electricity is exceptionally low, the indicator gets its power supply from the batteries. Your friend…" he threw a quick glance at the paper in front of him, "…Viktor, had a fantastic experience with this ring. He probably told you that his life was changed from the very roots."

I'd like to be able to say that for myself."

"Of course. Healthy scepticism is a good starting point. Lie down here." He pointed at the bed which looked like a massage table.

Tara placed the metal ring over my head. While I inhaled the scent of soap from her hands, I wondered what was awaiting me. My heart had started to beat rapidly, and my stomach muscles tensed. To the side I saw Gunter sitting next to the big apparatus connected to the ring by a thin cable, holding green papers in his hands. He started to read out the questions in a steady voice:

"Has any goal in your life remained unachieved?"

"Have you repressed anything in your life?"

I was about to say that I repress many things, but he stopped me. "You don't have to reply, your brain will give us the answers we need."

"Has anything in your life been suggested by others?"

"Has anything in your life been discarded?"

"Has your past life been re-stimulated?"

Through half closed eyes I saw him stop, redirecting his view from the screen in front of him towards me, emphasising the words: "Past life re-stimulated?"

I had no thoughts, or visions, all I felt was some sort of vague anxiety. At the same time I felt a barely noticeable resistance. I wasn't easily convinced by stories about previous lives, even though I'd tried many times to experience them. I'd read lots of books, and talked to many people who claimed to have a clear consciousness about their past lives. I'd had one dramatic experience which I categorically accepted as part of my past life, but I retained a certain degree of criticism towards it. In those data, reports and descriptions, they were all army leaders, state officials,

court ladies and prominent personalities, nobody cleaned the streets. Phantasms probably appear in many of those cases, experiences from early childhood, words which someone heard then and remembered at a subconscious level. Events which are really connected with past lives are almost always burdened with negative energy and great suffering. Wise and great people talked about their past lives. Pythagoras claimed that he remembered three of his. He knew who he was, what his names were and a great deal of other information. The brutal soldier, General Patton, had similar experiences. Leo Tolstoy wrote that the reincarnation theory seemed the most convincing to him. And now Gunter's question, "previous life re-stimulated?", was causing an increasingly stronger stirring and fluttering in the pit of my stomach and shallow, rapid breathing.

"I don't see any past life", I said, but felt that I was holding something back. There was something disturbing there I couldn't get to.

"I'm not asking you to see your past life. Tell me what you feel, what is happening in your body and whether you have any visions which persist."

"All I feel is a certain anxiety, fear and butterflies in my stomach."

"Very well. Don't supress anything. Let it go freely. Are you sure you don't have any persistent vision? Take a closer look."

The sacred ring is the devil's apparatus. Gunter was one step ahead and could see what was happening in me. I had one vision which kept appearing and disappearing, but it didn't make any sense. It was as though I was standing and, in front of me, there was a white cloth or a body covered in white linen. I focused on that vision and for a moment it became sharper. It was the dead body of a woman dressed in white. My anxiety pranced like a wave

filled with horror and I heard myself groaning. At the same time I was making every effort to remain calm. I told myself, while trying to conjure up the strength to hold on to that thought, that it was the hallucination which was creating the panic. It didn't work. The fear was becoming stronger and stronger, I started to writhe and twitch on the bed, and the spasm in my throat completely stopped my breathing.

"Don't resist! Don't resist!", Gunter was telling me in a calm but firm voice. "Breathe deeply and stay focused on that vision. We'll solve this problem quickly." I tried to take deep breaths for a while. Then he asked: "Who is that person?"

"It's some woman. She's dead."

"I understand. Do you know that woman in this life?"

"I heard a voice coming from within me; it was as though some other person was speaking: "That's my aunt. She really hated me. I hated her too."

"What did you do to her?"

Again, the same unknown, hoarse voice said: "I killed her."

"What happened?"

There were so many visions swirling before my eyes. I couldn't see a single one clearly, but the feeling of what was happening was more defined. Then the visions became clearer. "I can see only male feet in sandals slowly stepping in front of a room, then the whole outline of a man. That's me." There was no clear indicator as to why I would conclude that, it wasn't of my own volition, but I was dragged into that man's viewpoint and I felt myself in his body. I was holding a shiny blade in my right hand, and in the left the hair of a man who was struggling to get free of my grip. I stabbed the blade, knife or dagger, into his body,

and then slashed it across his throat. I shut my eyes tightly so as not to see the blood pumping out of the gaping wound. I felt the warmth of the blood sticking to my hands. Then I grabbed the woman by the hair and, in rage, stabbed her in the chest.

The scene was disjointed, lit up with some sort of grey light, akin to moonlight, and devoid of sound like a silent film. The rage I felt was mixed with horror because of the blood sticking to me.

"Go with the thoughts at the beginning of that event", said Gunter in a calm voice. "Tell me when you get there."

"I can't look at that."

"Force yourself to confront that experience. That's the way to be free of it forever. Again, go with your thoughts to the beginning of the event."

"I felt something break in me as I gave in: "I'm there."

"Tell me which vision you see, what you're feeling, how your body feels and what you're thinking about."

Even though I felt strong resistance and sickness in my body, I was now able to cite the elements he asked from me: images, emotions, physical feelings and thoughts. I was relieved to notice them weaken and gradually fade away with each passing thought. When only emptiness remained in the place of that event, I felt relief but also curiosity as to how all that suffering and chaos could just disperse and disappear like that. I opened my eyes and told Gunter: "Everything is empty. Thank you so much."

He smiled happily: "Now you are convinced of the power of our processes. Hundreds of people have experienced that before you. They usually think that confronting previous lives is amusing. It certainly isn't, because when you go back in time you face events with the greatest negative energy, and those are the ones when you caused

the suffering of others. Of course, your experiences are also burdened with suffering."

Tara and Asha were smiling happily, as though enjoying my confusion. Tara told me in a friendly voice: "You should eat, take lots of vitamins and get some sleep, and we'll continue tomorrow."

6

"Your past life is re-stimulated", said Gunter staring at the apparatus screen. He leaned forward stretching out his neck and breathing loudly through his nose.

My mind was emptied, and my body heavy. Pictures appeared in front of my eyes, or part of some indistinct picture, like transparent bubbles swaying before my eyes.

"What do you see?" Gunter asked, excitement and expectation apparent in his voice.

"Nothing. Only some senseless bubbles quivering before my eyes."

"Which thoughts and emotions accompany the image of those bubbles? Describe them." At that moment the whole event appeared in front of my eyes in full clarity and vivid colours. The first summer after the war. I was seven, and was going for a swim with my friends in the abandoned pools in the zoo. Seals used to be kept there but they disappeared just before the end of the war. The water in the pools wasn't changed very often but that didn't bother us. The smaller pool was for children and the bigger pool next to it, which we used to call the male pool, was for young boys who could swim. In the middle of that pool there was an island made of smooth concrete. As a reward for going to buy him cigarettes, one of the older boys carried me to the island in the middle. A large part of the island was covered with slippery green algae. "Take care not to slip over", he told me knowing that I couldn't swim. I was waving to my friends who had stayed on the stone wall

around the children's pool, watching me with envy. There were several young boys on the island who were pushing each other, diving into the water and climbing back out again. At one moment I slipped off the wet concrete and ended up in the water which was way over my head. I wanted to shout that I was under the water, for someone to get me out. I was struggling to get my breath but, instead of air, my lungs were filling with water.

I was fighting for my life, struggling, straining my whole body. I didn't feel fear but only a great desire for air. My arm movements became slower and weaker. At one moment I became still, just like everything around me. It was as though time had stopped, my body was motionless. In front of my eyes I could see bubbles of air slowly making their way out of my mouth, floating towards the surface. A feeling of happiness suddenly took over me. The cramp disappeared and the bubbles gliding before my face seamed unearthly and beautiful. A strange thought passed through my mind: "Is this death? That's the greatest joy."

At the same time I heard boys shouting, water splashing and loud laughter. Those sounds seemed to be coming from far away. Then something completely mesmerizing happened. My whole life started to pass before my eyes. Those were not just pictures, but all of the accompanying sensory impressions too. I saw myself running with a group of children over a field in the suburbs of our city, I heard their words and shouts, clearly saw the expressions on their faces and their movements. An image of me standing next to a group of older boys appeared to me. One of them was holding a catapult, aiming it at the dog sitting next to a wooden fence. I clearly heard the bang of the stone hitting the fence and the whimpering of the terrified dog as it ran away. An image from nursery school appeared to me, where I was sitting with a group of children around the nursery teacher who was telling us

how officers wore stars on their shoulders…my mother offering me the cake I used to like which smelt of vanilla. Memories accompanied by sensory impressions followed in quick succession one after the other.

The image of the bubbles slowly rising towards the surface did not merge, or overlap with those of my other memories. I saw them in separate spaces like in two parallel, slow motion films. The time frames were also separate. The sounds from outside the water in which I was drowning were separated in time from the events which were unfolding before my eyes. Later I heard people saying how their entire lives passed before their eyes within a matter of seconds and that was certainly true for me too. At the same time, the boys' voices which were reaching out to me also had their time. Never before had I felt such happiness, or at any time since.

Suddenly, somebody grabbed me by the neck and pulled me out of the water. Blinding sunlight painfully struck my eyes, and happiness was replaced with deep disappointment. I wanted to shout out and tell them to put me back in the water, to return me to the state of bliss which had been so brutally interrupted. Two young boys were shaking me and slapping my face. They took me out of the pool and put me down on the grass under the big chestnut tree. My friends gathered around me and started asking questions excitedly but I didn't understand their words. One young boy told them: "Leave him alone, he almost drowned."

That entire afternoon, while my friends were swimming, I sat thinking about my experience. What was that? I'd heard terrifying stories about drowning from older boys and parents, but nobody had mentioned the possibility of watching, for a short time, my life until then with so many details filled with emotions and such great joy.

While describing this experience to Gunter, the emotions I'd experienced then took over me again. I felt heat in my face and lightness in my body.

"What do you think, what did you experience then?" Gunter asked me.

"I don't have any clear thoughts about that", I said. "The explanations I've found in psychological literature seem groundless. They claim that, at moments of great danger, increased blood flow goes to the brain and that causes hallucinations."

He smiled in a superior way. "It's highly likely that none of those people have ever experienced the event they were describing. That's observing a past life in order to learn its lessons. At the same time that is the entry to previous lives. We gained our knowledge of the methods of penetrating them from our predecessors, the old Essenes. It would be good if you could read some information directly from Nemo, and not just have it passed on to you by me and others."

He got up, approached the shelf filled with books and other material and took down a text written in green letters on two pages and gave it to me. "Go to the next room. You can read this in peace there. Don't rush. First calm yourself down, you're rather agitated now."

I didn't wait to compose myself. I started reading immediately. The title was: "The true meaning of baptism." Nemo wrote in everyday language, simply, with short sentences. The candidate for the mysteries, through immersion in water, was dramatizing Christ's death and then entry into a new life cleansed of sin. In other words, baptism is the external symbol of internal change and transformation. Just as Jesus was buried in a grave, during baptism, we enter the water which represents the death and burial of our sinful body, and then get out of it thus

symbolising entry into a new life. His next sentence drew my attention: *"Such an experience in our methodology is used as the entrance to past lives."*

Again, the same images started to drift before my eyes accompanied by other sensory impressions, which were now weaker. I could accept Nemo's words as true. That was the explanation which I'd been unable to obtain all these years. I sat for a while rewinding parts of this experience. I tried in vain to renew the feeling of euphoria which had accompanied it; that had been the most valuable element of this experience.

"Can you continue with the process?", Gunter asked me from the door. "Do you have any questions?"

"I can. Questions? Only one. There was no entry to past lives. Everything happened to me in this life."

"You'll get to that later. Come here, put the ring on your head and relax completely. Try to disconnect from your rational spirit. Answer only on the basis of memories."

I tightened the divine ring around my forehead, relaxed, closed my eyes and waited for what was about to happen to my empty mind.

"Try to regain the feeling of euphoria you experienced then. See what you saw then, hear what you heard and feel the feeling of happiness which accompanied those impressions."

I created the vision of bubbles slowly floating upwards in my mind. I had difficulties recreating the sounds I'd heard then. They were faint and I only managed to renew them in my mind for a moment. The feeling of joy which I'd experienced then came over me again, although it wasn't as strong this time. Although it resembled my previous experience I was somehow separate from it. I strained to create it because, in the original experience, there was no

difference between me and the euphoria. I was that great happiness; there was nothing else in me.

"Relax, be completely passive…Tell me, have you ever had a similar experience before?"

I tried hard to recall my experiences from childhood, even though I was trying to remain passive. Images and thoughts were swarming through my mind, short, broken, suddenly appearing and then disappearing again.

"There! What's that image of?", Gunter raised his voice.

"There's no definite image, just a mixture of different things."

"Take a better look. Don't repress anything…There it is! What's that?"

"That's the picture of my gallbladder operation. I see myself lying on the operating table."

"What else can you see?"

"There's a brightly lit town. I can see it in the distance."

"Very good. Get closer to it and pay close attention to the details. What do you see?"

"It's not a town. It's an amusement park. It's beautiful and I can hear lovely music coming from it."

"What do you feel? What are you thinking about?" That was Gunter's voice, but it seemed to be coming from far away. My mind was filled with the image of the amusement park whose bright lights and music attracted me so strongly. The colours were overflowing, merging and changing nonstop. The changing of the colours seemed to be in harmony with the music, getting stronger and weaker at the same time.

"I feel a strong desire to go into the park and see what's happening there. I feel a sort of lightness. In fact, I'm not standing; I'm levitating, as though I don't have a body."

"Do you see any other beings… people?"

"Yes, this place is full of happy people. They're singing, shouting with joy, many of them are hugging each other. They're all smiling. There are lots of happy children. It's…it's like a huge flower full of happy insects, like a swarm of bees. This place is pulling me in."

I was so fascinated by the whole thing that I was whispering. The attraction force of this scene was dragging me towards its centre. I was in the middle of a big group of singing people and children, but they didn't notice me. There was no need to communicate with them, I was part of them; there was no seclusion. I felt the strongest attraction towards a big metal cylinder which most people had gathered around. The cylinder was in a horizontal position and was levitating as though it were weightless. It was around thirty meters long, and just high enough for me to stand in. It was surrounded by blue lights, and the pale green and pink light coming from it seemed to blend in with the music. My desire to go into the cylinder was increasingly stronger. I was slowly levitating towards the entrance when I noticed what was written on it: "Your life's secret." I knew I was in the right place.

I described what I saw to Gunter and the feeling of fascination which had overtaken me.

"What's happening? Did you get into the cylinder?"

"Yes, I only remember how I got in. After that it went dark."

"Go into your thoughts to the next moment in which you're aware. What's the first memory which comes to you?

"I'm lying on hot sand next to clear water. I don't know whether it's a lake or the sea. There are young, beautiful, naked women around me."

"What do you hear?"

"Lovely music, coming from a powerful organ. I hear voices and women's laughter. The language is unfamiliar, but I understand it."

"How long did this experience last?"

"It's hard to say. It seemed to me that I spent forty days there but, at the same time, measured in earth time, it only went on for two hours.

"How do you know that?"

"Well, that experience started with my gallbladder operation. When they put the anesthesia mask on my face, the last thing I saw was the big wall clock in the theatre. It was ten o'clock. When I came round from the anaesthesia it was a minute or two to twelve...and yet, I lived in the other world for a whole forty days."

"What do you think happened there?"

"It's some kind of interlocking of time. I don't know what that means."

"OK. Take the ring off your head and sit here in the armchair. We should talk."

I unwillingly slumped down into the armchair. After that disembodiment and lightness my body had become heavy and lifeless. The image of a brightly lit amusement park full of smiling people appeared before my eyes, but this time instead of happiness I felt fear. I had goosebumps at the nape of my neck, cramp in my stomach and the fear was growing stronger. I had a lump in my throat and shortness of breath.

Gunter was watching me intently through his sharp blue eyes. Through half closed eyes I noticed his two assistants. One was standing stiffly, staring right at me, and the other was leaning over the chair as though she was expecting something to happen.

"You see, Filip, we're not surprised by what happened to you in the hospital. Hospitals, maternity wards and mortuaries are the final terminals for the creation of spiritual scars in people. Those are the places where dark forces catch people who have deserted their physical bodies, attracting them with irresistible power and taking them to scar centres located in the Earth's orbit. He pointed upwards with his right forefinger. "Most often they look like islands of happiness or children's ideas of paradise – happy people, laughter and joy all around; there are no sick or depressed people there. It's all milk and honey, the landscape from a colourful dream. You were attracted to the electronic cylinder where scars are imprinted on you. Ideas which aren't yours, but which you feel are, are implanted in you. From then on you dedicate yourself to earning money, your career, sex, raising a family, gambling, in short, you give up spiritual development and moving towards freedom. Do you feel any fear now?"

For a moment I wanted to deny my state, but didn't have the strength for that. I froze, the fear was making my hair stand on end, and my sweaty palms were shaking. "Yes, I feel acute panic. I want to scream in fear."

"Fear is normal for your state. We've all been through that. There's no need to worry. With our methods we'll release you from those scars and you'll be a free being."

"How?"

"You'll see. We'll start tomorrow. Now eat, have a good sleep and take lots of B-complex vitamins.

7

I was lying in the processing room with the divine ring around my head. Gunter and Carlos, a Latin American I'd never met before, were sitting in front of the screen. He had thin lips, dark skin and white, animal-like, teeth. When he looked to the side, he would do that with his eyes only without moving his head as though he had a stiff neck. Their eyes were fixed on the screen. Asha and Tara were walking silently around the room carrying out their short instructions.

"Now we're going to return you to the experience during the operation when you obviously got the scar", said Gunter.

I was tense, stiff, and my breathing had become short and shallow. "I want to know what's happening to me", I said with effort.

Gunter inhaled loudly, preparing to answer me, but Carlos replied quickly and resolutely: "That's a long story. You'll find out everything later. In short, this is the use of bio-electronics for the expansion of human consciousness."

Gunter took over the process: "Close your eyes, relax and go back in you mind to the moment when you found yourself in front of that big cylinder."

I didn't need time for that. That cylinder had kept coming back to me the whole time over the past two days. "I'm there."

"Very good. Tell me the last thing you see before the darkness."

"It's like I'm sitting on a chair in front of some empty screen."

"What do you see after that?"

"Nothing, only the darkness."

"Very good. Go through your thoughts to the moment you leave the darkness. What do you see and feel first?"

"A great weakness of body. I'm completely exhausted, I have no motivation. I just want to sleep."

"Go back just a bit before that moment. What do you see and feel?"

"I see an empty screen and feel that I've made a decision which will affect my whole life."

"Which decision?"

"I don't know. I can't see it."

"OK. Go back again to the beginning of the experience when you were sitting on the chair and looking at the screen. Tell me what you see now."

First I felt fear. It intensified suddenly and enveloped me completely. And then I saw an image of myself lying tied to a dirty stony floor and two people with hoods over their heads like executioners. They were standing around me holding metal torture devices which had red hot ends. Around me, big rats were running across the floor through dirty puddles.

"I see myself surrounded by torturers and filthy rats. I can feel the pain of the burns on my body and terrible disgust."

At that moment my consciousness intensified. I felt acute pain, nausea and, at the same time, I was aware of Gunter and Carlos and was able to follow their instructions.

"Leave that event aside. Go in your thoughts and feelings to the later event, when you were sitting in front of the empty screen with the impression that you'd made a decision which would affect your whole life."

"Ok. I'm there."

"Now go back as far as you can and tell us what's happening."

I felt that, completely broken, I was accepting something against my will, but I couldn't do otherwise because I didn't have the strength to resist. I heard the piercing metal voice ordering me: "I'll never again aspire to freedom! Freedom is deceit. Self-recognition is deceit." Then I heard myself repeating those same words: "I'll never again aspire to freedom! Freedom is deceit. Self-recognition is deceit."

Carlos's voice seemed even stronger to me: "Leave this event. Go to the previous one when you saw the torturers and rats."

I didn't have the strength to do that, I was looking for a way to resist that demand. But Gunter kept pushing me unrelentingly: "Don't resist! You have to confront it. That's the only way to free yourself of it forever."

I felt a sharp pain from a hot iron being pressed against my neck and saw a huge muddy rat, covered with scabs, walking over my chest towards my face. The rat put his snout close to my mouth. I screamed. I wanted to throw him off me by flexing my muscles but I was so tightly bound that I couldn't make even the slightest movement. At that moment I heard a piercing voice: "You want freedom? Sex is freedom, a woman's mucous membranes.

That's freedom." Then I felt a strong electric shock at the side of my head. I was numb, I struggled to remain conscious. Then I heard clearly: "Believe only what I say! Repeat it all the time. Don't think about anything else! Don't read anything else or talk to people who tell you differently." Then I was struck in the temple, even stronger than before. The big blue-yellow light flashed before my eyes and I lost consciousness.

The blackout was brief. When I came round I felt intoxicated, asked myself what was happening and tried to come to my senses by shaking my head like you do after a blow to the chin.

They led me in turn from the beginning to the end of the event. With relief I noticed that the time difference between was getting shorter and the emotional charge was fading. It was like removing the burden from a wounded back. I don't know how much time passed before all the unpleasant emotions had disappeared, and the whole event was recognised and emptied. There were no images of torturers, no pain, no rats. Just emptiness in my mind.

"Is there anything you want to say?" There was pleasure in Carlos's voice.

"I'm completely empty. The evil has gone. This experience was…I don't have the words. Thank you."

"You can get up. When you calm down, write us a report for the records – about how you experienced this process. We'll continue tomorrow."

My legs were shaky. "My God", I said while leaving the room. A feeling of pleasure overcame me, a feeling of liberation and fulfilment and I laughed out loud. My laughter filled the hallway as I went made my way down to the dining room.

8

The library was a small room on the second floor. The shelves on one of the walls were filled with books and on the other with materials in thick folders, like those you find in an office. A man with a grey beard and long grey hair tied back in a ponytail was reading at one table, and a blond, freckled girl dressed in an Indian sari at the other. A woman with a shaved head stood in the middle of the room, as though she was expecting me. She asked me: "Can I help you?" There was a strong smell of incense emanating from her. "Which book do you want?"

"I'd like something about the elimination of spiritual scars."

"Of course. Those are exceptionally interesting texts. You'll see."

"*The scar*", Nemo began his text, "*is a painful and powerful tool for overpowering a human being by assigning him false goals and fake concepts in a malicious attempt to control and subdue him. It consists of pain and unconsciousness*." The procedure for the elimination of scars which Gunter and Carlos had used on me became clear. They'd asked me to face the moment when the scar began and the first moment after my return to consciousness. After that I'd gone deeper and deeper into the darkness of oblivion, moving in my mind alternately backwards and forwards, thus directing me to lift the veil from this shadowy period until the first and last moments of the scar were connected. That was, through confrontation, the

end of the scar. It was obvious that man was not capable of doing that by himself.

The cylinder which man would be drawn into was not made of tangible material, but of concentrated psychic energy, making it impossible to see from Earth even through the strongest of telescopes. It was located in orbit, several thousands of kilometres away. The stigmatisation program began with the registration of the state a person was in and then, through a series of dramatic films, that state was reduced to a significantly lower level and oblivion was induced. For instance, if a man who was emotionally and intellectually on the level of people from the Middle Ages was drawn into the cylinder, he would be exposed to films with scars of significantly lower intensity then a man from our time. The computers in the cylinder, also made of concentrated psychic energy, would almost immediately establish the weakest points in the structure of the man's personality and work through them. There weren't many things I was afraid of but I was terrified of rats. Hence the pile of rats around me, dirty and scabby, and the one approaching my mouth. The person would experience the pain inflicted on him as real pain which would overcome his ability to confront it. This is why the person would lose consciousness at some point. At the same time the scar programs would be induced and that would have the effect of strong posthypnotic suggestion which that person would not know anything about. My obsession with sex, which had developed after my operation, and the simultaneous loss of interest in spiritual development and aversion towards to it, became clear to me.

I gave this text back to the girl with the shaved head, lay down on my bed in the dormitory and started to scroll through the life I'd been living for the past several years.

9

Science fiction had attracted me ever since childhood, other dimensions, other worlds and strange creatures unlike humans. I used to borrow those books from the library and read everything that had been translated. Later, when I learned English, wider possibilities opened up for me. While reading one of these books, I'd take long breaks. I'd relive what I'd read, changing the content in my imagination, identifying with some of the characters. I used to have my own original fantasies, which I could call science fiction.

One of those would come back to me again and again. I'd be on an unknown planet, similar to Earth. There were no other people there apart from me. Right next to the shore, there was a small, round lake with clear water. The banks of the lake were covered with fine sand and slightly further away soft grass. There was a small cave not far from the shore, with smooth walls like glass and sand on the ground. I spent the nights there. The climate was mild, the nights warm and different types of fruits grew near the lake.

I made a bed out of pliable bamboo and covered it with soft ferns. I kept fruit in big shells and baskets I wove from wicker.

After some time, which turned into several months, I realised that I was repeating Robinson's story in my imagination, but that didn't bother me. Unlike Robinson, my life on this unknown planet was stretching out towards infinity and I wasn't coming back to civilisation.

The other fantasy which obsessed me for a long time was about a golden comet. Who knows when this huge comet made of gold came down from the cosmos only to land in this remote tree-lined mountain area. While roaming through this forest, I came across a large crater in the ground. I entered a narrow opening in the mountainside using a fire torch to light my way and after some time found myself in front of a cave wall gleaming in the firelight because it was made of pure gold. I went home, gathered the necessary tools and rented a hut in the closest village where I slept. I told the owner that I was a geologist searching for ore nearby.

I covered the entry to the cave with prickly green shrubs. I spent most of each day next to the golden comet lit up by the lantern I'd brought. It was made of pure gold, so I flattened off the chunks I'd chipped off with a hammer and sold them piece by piece to the goldsmiths in the town. This soon developed into a business and I took lots of gold abroad. I did a lot of good deeds with the money I made, mostly for people who didn't know me. I'd read an article in the newspaper about a family with a sick child who needed money for treatment which they didn't have. Then I'd turn up at their home, refuse to give my name, take out the money and put it on the table. I'd see their astonishment, then expressions of gratitude, tears in their eyes. I'd carried out many such acts of charity.

I noticed that the feeling of satisfaction which accompanied the first fantasies of that kind faded after a while. Then I turned to a new level of fantasy – I'd give huge donations anonymously, through a lawyer, to orphanages and hospitals and I even financed the construction of a big, lavish library.

One day I became active in real life. During the break, in our high school yard, an older friend mentioned that he'd found a book full of fantastic stories. The author was a

woman called Abileen, who wrote about opening doors to the endless cosmos for anyone who was ready for that. His words sparked my interest and I asked for the book. He lent it to me for two days only because it wasn't his and I copied out the whole book. For the first time in my life I was able to fully concentrate on something for two days. I immediately started with breathing exercises four times a day – in the morning, at noon, in the evening and again at midnight, as the book prescribed, putting up with my mother's critical comments that if I continued, I'd go mad like many before me.

On another occasion, while visiting a friend, I saw a catalogue for occultism and mysticism books published by some company from London on his table. It was as though a great diamond had fallen into my hand. I took it home and read the same texts for hours until I decided on Swami Vivekananda's Raja Yoga. This book opened up much wider horizons for me. I must have read it a dozen times. I underlined many places in various colours, and copied out significant parts of it. I started to practice pranayama seriously. I was hoping to develop siddhis and occultist powers through it but, apart from heavy sweating and palpitations, nothing significant happened. That didn't discourage me. I practiced pranayama for several years.

During that period I had several strange experiences which I liked to think of as valuable occultist adventures. For a while I did autosuggestion to strengthen my will and create persistence, and one day I came up with the idea of changing the colour of my eyes. I'd seen a bad colour photo on the front pages of a popular magazine. I still remember the name of the actress – Helen Fiona. Her eyes in that photo were as green as new grass. Each morning and evening I gave myself forty autosuggestions: "The pigment in my eyes is changing and they're becoming as green as Helen Fiona's." I also visualised a picture of myself in the

mirror with the same colour eyes. I don't remember how long that went on for, but I do know that I was persistent. Then one day I had a pleasant surprise. I was with a group of boys and girls at the beach, on the banks of the river. At one moment one older girl said: "Filip, I've never noticed before that you have such green eyes." Until then I'd had inconspicuous brown eyes. That was confirmation that suggestion could trigger visible bodily changes. After some time I stopped doing this exercise and my eyes returned to their old brown colour.

Memories of past incarnations have attracted me since the very first moment I heard about them. Even though my friends used to make jokes about the possibility of previous existence, I believed in it. I bought Dion Fortune's Practical Occultism in Daily Life, in which two chapters were dedicated to memories of previous incarnations, and I started to practice the described exercises without much persistence. I found the demands from this book hard and I don't believe many people managed to meet them. Whenever some historical period attracted you, according to Fortune, you were supposed to read historical books about it, go to museums to see artefacts from that period and, if possible, surround yourself with such objects in your apartment. Of course, I didn't do that at all but, in the evenings in bed, I'd concentrate on following hypnagogic images, which was her second demand. Those are the images which appear just before you fall asleep or just before you wake up. They're often vivid and unrelated to daily activities. After a few minutes of following them, I'd fall asleep even though I was supposed to remain focused on them.

That was the first time I faced the mechanism of occultist experiences. I stopped doing those exercises after concluding that such experiences were not accessible to me. In such a situation, when, following a period filled with

exertion you completely relax and give on up your goal, the desired experience appears suddenly and in full strength.

One night I came home from the beach, tired and sleepy. I had my dinner and went to bed, but I didn't fall asleep straight away. I was lying down, relaxed, in a semi-awake state with no particular thoughts in my mind when suddenly it was as though I'd been struck by lightning. A dramatic scene passed fleetingly before my eyes. There was a large group of poorly dressed Russian men and women gathered in a square. Their clothes were torn, in tatters to be more precise, the men had long beards, and the women wore headscarves. I was kneeling on a wooden podium and, at the exact moment I saw myself in that position, a big blade flashed above my head, either a sword or an axe. I was being executed. I screamed and sat up sharply in bed. My heart was beating loudly, I could almost hear it, and my breathing was ragged. My arms were shaking and my mouth was completely dry. I didn't have the slightest doubt that this was a vision from a previous life. Fortune had stressed that. The way to distinguish between empty fantasies and true experiences from a past life was the strong emotional discharge. And that had happened in this situation.

It then became clear why I'd been so interested in the Cossack leader, Stenka Razin's rebellion in Russia at the end of the seventeenth century. I'd read all the available literature about him several times. My thoughts had been moving towards this experience against my will and after some time the elements had started to connect. While I was reading it, I'd felt a strong identification with Razin. Then I became convinced that I wasn't him, but one of his close associates. The name I had at that time came by itself – Ivan Zarubin.

At that time I had many déjà vu experiences. In such circumstances I had the impression that I was entering

some other world, where the laws of physic didn't apply. When I asked one of my distant cousins, a psychiatrist, for an explanation, he gave me an unconvincing answer, that although this was unusual, such experiences often had nothing mystical to them. For me there was a great deal that was mystical in those experiences – I'd enter a spiritual state with the undeniable feeling that I'd already experienced it before. There was no doubt in that impression at all. At times, rarely, the thought used to come to me – now I'll have an experience which I've already experienced and such an event would really happen again in full strength and clarity.

I was having experiences which I could call premonitions. I'd be walking down the street when I'd suddenly start thinking about some girl I liked. That thought would be accompanied by strong physical feelings – the blood would rush to my face followed by an intense heat all over my body, my eyes would start watering and my arms shake. While I was wondering what was happening to me, that same girl would appear from around the corner, or would come out of a shop where I hadn't been able to see her before.

That entire time the memory of my childhood drowning, when I'd seen my whole life pass before my eyes, would often return to me. That was the most mysterious of all experiences. I experienced my entire childhood as some sort of secret mythical world, which existed outside space and time, because regardless of how old I was, it appeared in my mind again and again. Far away in its vastness, like in another world, were treasures I'd often return to.

I used to buy books about yoga and mysticism, practiced breathing exercises, tried to meditate. I'd stop those activities only to return to them again later. It was then that I read Somerset Maugham's book, The Razor's Edge. The main character's name was Larry Darrel, a young American who rejected the idea of fitting into the

American dream of success. He wonders around the world trying to find spiritual peace and answers to the fundamental questions which traditionally torment most spiritual seekers. Finally, he goes to India and finds what he's been looking for in yoga teacher Sri Ganesh's ashram, who was obviously Ramana Maharshi. After a few years, he experiences short-lived enlightenment and returns to America with the aim, as far as that's possible in western countries, to live like a modern Sadu.

Although this book does not belong to the literary greats, it had a stronger effect on me than any other in my life until then. It took me months to decide to get the money together to go to India like the hero from this book. This idea was intensified by the sea of young people from Western Europe who, with rucksacks and sleeping bags on their backs, were traveling to the East by train. All that time the feeling that I was only a temporary guest and stranger in this world was growing in me. My true homeland was somewhere far from this planet to which I was bound and shackled with invisible chains. Gradually, and with increasing certainty, I came to the realization that the reality I lived in was only a tiny sample from the totality of life and that discovery created in me some sort of spiritual melancholy which originated from the premonition that the world I lived in was not my true home and the knowledge that the homeland I longed to return to was hidden far away in the expanses of some primordial mythical land. At one moment I became fed up of being an alien, I was prepared to invest all my efforts into getting back to my distant, and still unclear, homeland.

It was around this time that I went into hospital for an operation to have my gall bladder removed. Afterwards I lost interest in the things that'd had the most value for me until then: seeking answers to the question of who I was, the meaning of life, the enigma of the endless cosmos... I

sopped all spiritual practices, and was ready to accept my family and work colleagues' opinions that this was an infatuation which only attracted losers. Whenever I started reading a book from that field, or was in company discussing the world beyond, I was overtaken by an indeterminate fear.

The disappearance of my hermetic and mystical interests coincided with a sudden burst of interest in sex. I started to socialise with people who considered sex almost the only valuable part of their lives. I convinced myself that Freud was right in his claim that all man's activities are based on the expression of sexual energy. I had several short relationships with women of various professions and ages and none of them lasted for more than a few days. My wife was working at the otorhinolaryngology clinic, and had several attractive female colleagues and I had superficial relationships with them, of course without her knowledge. And with a few nurses too. I was unable to connect with any woman for very long. I would lose interest straight after sexual intercourse.

When, during the process, I revived the scar I got in the programming station, the sudden change in my life focus became clear to me.

I'd thought that one part of me was like a tiny spark, irrevocably buried in the past. Then the short talk with Viktor after his return from the Essen School lit up that spark. I came to Barcelona, and now I was facing an enigma of spiritual scars. I'd read lots of books and had frequent, long conversations with doctors and some psychiatrists about various subjects, but none of them had ever mentioned the possibility of humans having such experiences. They'd just shake their heads and say – trauma, as though that word explained everything. But in the teaching of the Essenian school, that was a phenomenon elaborated in detail, and a methodology

whose implementation provided clear results. There's obviously a huge gap between official science and alternative studies.

10

My work at the school became routine. Gunter and Carlos would do processes with me in the mornings and then explain the event which I'd restored to consciousness, the theories created by Nemo and, at the end, answer my questions. During a séance, I would restore at least one past life to consciousness, sometimes several if they were connected with the same idea. The whole system gradually became clear to me.

In response to my question as to how Nemo had developed the practice methodology, I was given a rather logical answer. With a faraway look through the window, Gunter said in a firm voice: "There's no method which would verify the absolute truth of anybody's past life apart from that person himself, particularly if that life occurred on some other planet, or another galaxy. The only available method, which enabled scientific verification, was gathering data from a large number of people who were not in mutual contact. Of course, the original idea was Nemo's. The data comes from over a hundred people, outstanding in these fields, and by processing those data it was possible to achieve a valid method in its final form."

"I'd like to talk to some of those people."

"Gunter smiled and glanced at Carlos, Asha and Tara: "There are four such persons here."

He probably saw the doubt on my face. He continued in a calm voice: "You see Filip, 2,600 years ago Buda showed us the way, and the old Gnostics in the time of

Christ told us the same. Buda, as you know means awakened one. Exactly. When a person breaks loose from the mud of this world, he awakens from the poisonous dream of illusions."

"I have to become Buda to escape the world of illusions?"

"Only Nemo is on Buda's level. He is a completely enlightened being. For us it's enough to awaken spiritually."

"If we aren't able to experience Buda's state, which states mark our awakening?"

"I'll tell you. Try to follow carefully and if something is unclear, ask." Gunter seemed like a man who enjoyed the sound of his own voice. "You see, the human structure is simply that of a carrier, a vehicle for Atman or the true self. Atman is the soul, eternal and indestructible, but its carriers such as the body and spirit are susceptible to change and decay. Christian theology implanted in us the false assumption that we have a soul. Indian philosophy points out the simple fact – man does not have a soul, man is a soul on the deepest level of truth. How can it lose itself? Man can lose his body, which happens when he dies, and he can also lose his personality, which is susceptible to change, for instance when it falls apart in schizophrenia, but he can't lose himself."

He was looking at me questioningly. What he'd said seemed logical. I'd gradually come to such a conclusion after reading books about yoga.

Gunter went on: "For us this is the most important thing: in the unenlightened Altman is within the body and soul, they are interior and unaware."

"What does interior mean?"

"Such a person acts all the time from inside the body and is fully identified with it. The body is the only soul they have. Do you understand? As Oscar Wilde wittily and cynically said, addressing God: "God, spare me physical pain and I'll take care of the moral pain myself".

During spiritual development, in some deep experience, man enters the Atman state at one moment, usually for a short time. Its main characteristic is consciousness about consciousness. Atman is aware that he is conscious. At that time man has a feeling of expansion and temporary infinity. Then he returns to his usual state of interiority and unawakenedness. When the Atman state becomes more permanent and stable, man gets the irresistible desire to leave this planet and go to other, free worlds. He does that in his astral body. But, on that road, terrible traps await him, stations for stigmatisation where scars are created. The idea that freedom is worthless and dangerous is instilled in him by electronic hypnosis, as well as the mechanism of oblivion. Man loses motivation for spiritual work and development for a long time. He works, eats, sleeps, procreates and raises children, drives cars and plays worthless games such as sex, sport and having a career."

"Like what happened to me?"

"To you and everybody else. That isn't an exceptional experience, that's the rule. The scar has the power to turn a man previously directed towards freedom into a robot made of organic cells who spends his life eating, drinking and doing other empty activities. That's why Buda taught us that this life is illusory."

After my scarring during the operation in hospital, I didn't lose interest in mysticism completely; I read books and other..."

"Yes, but you didn't actually do anything. Transition towards action is the crucial criterion for spiritual maturity. You might've heard the saying; if fantasies were horses, beggars would be jockeys. Also, whenever you embarked on some spiritually valuable activity, you experienced fear or some strong criticism towards it. Those are the most frequent programs which are implanted into the scar. Scars keeps man's attention focused on planetary games, even when that's not necessary. For instance, when man starts meditating, there's no reason why his own thoughts should impede him. But he can't stop thinking. That endless stream of thoughts is also behaviour planted by the scar... Soon you'll have more experiences. Just carry on."

11

Gunter was right; there were more strange experiences to come. One shook me to the bone … spine …guts… I'm looking for the right word for what happened to me but I can't find it. Carlos and Gunter led me through a series of past lives in the usual way. Unattractive content and experiences devoid of drama emerged – I was a village blacksmith, then a farmer somewhere in Western Europe, then a peasant in some unidentified country in the Far East. I spent my time there working in the paddy fields, with muddy water up to my knees. I passed away without drama, surrounded by my children and relatives. Like in most past lives, death came as relief for an exhausted body.

A few moments later I charged into a strange world. This planet didn't look like Earth. It was all vivid colours, like a huge ball of mixed rainbows after the rain which were intertwining, shrinking and expanding as though the planet was breathing. I was lying on my back on the ground, drained of energy, my gaze directed upwards. It seemed to be the edge of some bottomless abyss. Above me, in fields of coloured light, a huge funnel of darkness was spreading, its narrow part encircling my head. The darkness had no end; it was spreading into the endless, starless cosmos. A feeling of absolute loneliness and abandonment overcame me. Then, a huge being appeared high above me, leaning over the abyss and looking straight at me. Surprised, I recognised the cosmic Christ. He was made of lights and was radiating the love I'd never felt until that moment all around him. The whole immense space was imbued with it.

My body was shaking and trembling with the power of that love. I wanted to pass away and disappear into it.

Cosmic Christ announced himself with one word which reverberated through the whole cosmos: ARELENA. I knew its meanings instantly. I say meanings, because there are two: **forever** and **love**. I knew that this was the love which exists between two conscious beings, like a recognisable spiritual oneness with the other, like two oppositely placed cosmic mirrors which reflect each other. I remembered the people I'd stopped loving and it was clear that the human Ego had become involved in that drama like a foreign body, dimming the spiritual spark which is in us. But Aralena remains no matter what happens between the Egos of two conscious beings, regardless of what conflicts, misunderstandings and hate come to the stage. She is there in the rare moments of release, enlightening our consciousness with glittering lights of truth. That shocking experience was my Christification.

I knew that the Ego was a cruel master and the enemy of spiritual development, because his essence lies in the isolation of other beings. He's an unfortunate creature, a dwarfish demiurge, who invests all of his powers in erecting the wall which separates him from the rest of mankind. Love is the only feeling which breaks down that wall and eliminates the Ego because for man love means that what happens to another is more important than himself. When we love, the Ego disappears, but all the time in the basement of the psyche, he lies in wait for the chance to take over the stage and raise the walls of spiritual detachment.

So as not to attract attention, I spent the whole afternoon repeating the word aralena to myself. I remembered that a few years ago the leader of the Algolian group in Belgrade had come to the same word, arelena, through meditation. It's strange that the same experiences appear

to different people when the time is ripe. I lay in bed with the desire to rest for the next day's processes, but that didn't happen. The word arelena was a real dream breaker. Without my participation, it continued to circle through my mind. I fell asleep just before dawn.

12

Lately afternoons and in the evenings in the dining room there were conversations about the experiences people had had during the processes took place in the dining room in the late afternoon and evenings. Similar systems of spiritual development and therapies were sometimes criticised. Such criticism usually started with the words - I don't want to say anything negative about that method, about that teacher but... and criticism of the personality, methodology or results of the founders or main exponents would ensue. Any mention of anyone's valuable experiences with some other system would meet with the tacit reproof of the majority. Emphasising the values of the Essen School and Nemo's personality was ubiquitous. I was tempted several times to make a critical remark about his cult of perso-nality, but I refrained. They would probably have jumped down my throat.

During those conversations I became close to some interesting people. They came from different parts of the world. Latin Americans and Scandinavians were dominant among them. I discovered that the Balti have a special sense of identity. There were three of them, two men and a woman from one of the Baltic States, I couldn't remember which one - Lithuania, Estonia or Latvia; I couldn't tell the difference between those three countries. One night, Lily, a woman from the Baltic States, began talking about Nemo and with her first words she was overcome with emotion and her eyes filled with tears. It was hard to believe that he got so deeply into people's souls: "Coming here, I had no

particular expectations or feelings. When I first saw him, he was moving a few feet from the front door to the place he sits when lecturing. I looked at him and felt that he was simply love moving around in human form. I started crying and I cried and cried, because I literally saw God. I didn't expect to experience that. It was a shock for me. At that moment, everything I'd read and heard about his teaching was in front of me. I felt overcome by a feeling of immense gratitude at being so fortunate to be in that place. "

The people there were silent and slowly nodded their heads. A few of them wept. It would have been inappropriate if I'd said I didn't feel anything similar. To me he was a well-integrated man of great knowledge. Nothing more than that. A woman with dark eyes and black hair, who looked like a Mexican, added, speaking slowly in a solemn tone as if she was in church: "I completely understand how you feel. I experienced something similar. The first time I entered the lecture hall I was completely closed and probably scared. But on another occasion I sat wide open and I was able to experience the teacher in full. His great energy filled the room. The lustre of his divine light radiated over us all, so the walls, the things in the room and all those present became visible expressions of his spiritual power. The boundaries between objects and people were lost, so that reality became a field of divine light, and not a field filled with various objects. Our beloved teacher didn't say anything for some time. Silently he revealed the truth to me that substance is the same as light, and that his all-pervasive presence is the very essence of that light. When he spoke, and when he remained silent, his spiritual essence permeated my body and mind, pulling me into the sea of divine light. He infused every cell of my being with bliss and love."

There was a long silence. Then Robinho turned to me and asked loudly: "Filip, what did you experience when you saw him?"

All eyes and their undivided attention were on me. Whenever someone puts me in the spotlight like that, against my will I try to give them what they want to hear, to behave in a way acceptable to them. I felt pressure to say something similar to the experiences they'd described and, at the same time, resistance to coming out with a position with no experiential background: "Well, I wish I'd experienced at least part of such sublime experiences, but I didn't. The feelings these two ladies have described can be heard in many spiritual groups. They're an expression of the spiritual awakening of students in the presence of an enlightened teacher."

"Which teacher?" Kirke asked me with nervousness in her voice.

"There are several. If you study the history of the creation and activities of spiritual groups and cults, you'll find many such statements. "

"Cults? Illuminism is not a cult, but a cosmic religion that transcends all existing ones. And Nemo is not one of the many self-declared who pose as teachers. He's a true self-realized teacher on the level of Buddha. "

"Members of other spiritual groups claim the same about their teachers." I suddenly realized that that I was starting to make enemies, so I avoided the term "cult".

"I hope you don't mean Ron Hubbard's followers," said Allen, a man who is often on call at the front desk. He had a strained look on his face and was impatiently waiting for my answer.

"Among others, them too. You can read the same in the reports of Sai Baba and Herakhan Baba's followers, there's also Adi Da, whom Alan Watts, who was a great authority on the spiritual movement, considered the only self-realised teacher born in the West. "

"Just because it's written down doesn't mean it's true!" said one young American with short hair like their marines. "Most of the reports cited in their journals and materials are fictitious."

These pleasant group members involved in a healthy debate suddenly turned into spiritual storm troopers ready to attack. I'd obviously stirred up a hornet's nest. I saw their bigoted and aggressive statements as a deep cut in my relationship with the whole group. To get out of this situation which had begun to heat up, I brought the conversation to an end in a calm voice: "I'm sorry to disappoint you, I haven't had any experiences similar to yours. I see Nemo as a man of great knowledge. Maybe I'll eventually have the same experience. "

"It's strange you haven't experienced that yet," said one Scandinavian in a voice filled with disappointment.

13

"We Gnostics are spiritual nomads, a rambling tribe from the vastness of the galaxy ", Robinho told me, looking upwards, as if searching for the stars from which he came. We were sitting in a small pizzeria with a view over the towers of Gaudi's Sagrada Familia. We'd become close during his stay in Barcelona. He was more temperamental and interesting than the cold Scandinavians and Balti, he'd had a life filled with unusual experiences. I felt best in the company of such people. He'd lived in Paris for several years, where he worked as a technical draftsman and saved all his money to pay for self-improvement courses. From his testimony and data handling it could be seen that he'd participated in many. I was slightly edgy while following his conversation because the groups of tourists and their buses parked around the towers were bothering me.

"I thought you were a Catholic", I said.

"I'm far from any religious affiliation. All official churches are tools for exploiting the idea of God. They aren't inclined towards mystical knowledge, because a mystic perceives God with his heart, without a mediator, priest, or church. When you revive several of your past lives, you become convinced that in their endless succession the only stable point is the feeling of self, your I, and the rest are clothing which you put on depending on the circumstances." He took a sip of his drink, smiled and added: "During that conversation yesterday intimately I agreed with you. I didn't want to show that, it would've seemed as though we were making a fraction against the

authority of the teacher. You were honest, you didn't succumb to the pressure to talk like the others. I've seen a lot of that and you see that idolatrous glorification of teachers, instructors and group leaders everywhere. It's a good principle to stick to your personal experience. I was taught that by my revived past lives. "

"I agree with you that the memory of past lives gives an extended vision of the world. I wonder which other fascinating experiences are waiting for me to awaken them."

He said this through his full lips: "When man removes the emotional charge from his past lives, he loses interest in them. At the beginning it's an attractive area, because man wants to confirm that he lived before this life and that he won't stop existing after it."

"I want to see where I lived, what happened, whether I can recognise some people from my past lives who are around me now."

"That loses its attraction very quickly." Robinho said, shaking his head. "The only thing of any value is whether you learn the lessons that you previously ignored. I finally learned that you shouldn't make compromises with your conscience, and I did that in many of my lives. If you always tell the truth, you will surely pay a high price. But that will never cost you outside as much as it will pay off from the inside. When you make a compromise with your conscience, the initial investment is usually small, but the interest grows rapidly. As for recognising people from past lives in this life, that can be an extremely painful experience."

"Yes, such experiences can be painful."

"Sooner or later you won't be able to avoid a very painful experience which will make death seem like salvation." He looked down at the table, a thoughtful expression on his face, and then went on: "I had such an

experience in Dallas, in America, during a primordiology process. In my life just before this one, I died as a child of four or five years of age. During those processes I remembered the place where I lived, the names of my parents and my name. It was a small town near Sao Paulo. I went there a few years ago, and I recognized the house where I lived and the neighbouring houses too."

"I was consumed by such a deep sense of sadness the likes of which I'd never experienced before. I asked the neighbours and they told me that two old people lived in my former house - my father and mother – who'd tragically lost a child twenty years ago and had had no children since. I paced around the house for some time, until they finally appeared. Although they'd aged in those twenty years, I recognized them immediately. They shuffled along arm in arm like the elderly tend to do. I was going to approach them to start a conversation, to ask them something but, suddenly, all my strength seeped out of me. Tremendously strong feelings engulfed me, my tears started to fall, I was gasping for breath. I could barely stand on my feet. They walked slowly away and I withdrew." Robinho started crying, hardly able to utter the last words.

"I've had and been almost overcome by strong feelings. It must have been a very painful experience. I don't know how I'd have coped with it. "

"Sometimes experiences are so dramatic that a man would burn out psychologically if he were to openly expose himself to them. It's fortunate that we have some sort of built-in fuse. I learned that on Jim Tallmadge's prim-ordiology. We can remember only what we can handle at that point. That's why we can't remember many past lives. Jim Tallmadge said that the deepest truth about us is that God and man are one. We don't have the strength to deal with that. Anthony Duncan, a Christian mystic, once said: "A man would like to seek out God? He should watch out!

He will reveal his true self. Another man would like to seek out himself? He should watch out! He is in mortal danger of perceiving God!'"

"It seems to me that the new self-development systems are getting deeper into the essence of man and are becoming faster and more efficient."

Robinho nodded, "You're right. Like everything else, spiritual methods are also developing. Conflicts between the old and new system representatives are happening all the time because of that. That's the conflict between the conservatives and the creators of new learning. I don't know if you know that the orthodox Buddhists saw the origins of Zen as sacrilege. But the story repeats itself. The different schools of Zen are involved in a feud with each other. When, after eight years of practicing Zen in Japan, Philip Kapleau came to the United States and began to teach, the representatives of Rinzai and Soto Zen immediately attacked him for degrading the sacred teaching. However, he wasn't immune to similar intolerance. During one of his lectures a student asked him what he thought of Charles Berner's intensive enlightenment. He replied that it was a typical American express method that degrades spirituality. I've experienced Berner's intensive and am convinced that it is effective. In three days, some participants had a direct experience of truth to the question - who am I, while Kapleau's Zen meditation takes months for that."

"That relationship between the conservatives and the bearers of new tendencies is repeated throughout the whole history of spirituality", I agreed with him. "Two and a half thousand years ago Lao Tzu said that a boat serves us well to cross a big river. But when we get to the other side, we leave it on the coast, continuing our journey on foot and do not drag the boat along with us on land."

"I didn't know that data, but he accurately described how the two main groups of people look at the changes: spiritual fundamentalists and innovators. Every action is followed by a reaction."

"Have you experienced scarring up there, in those electronic cylinders?"

He smiled briefly: "You can't avoid that Filip, even if you want to. That's electronic barbed wire which is supposed to prevent us, the Gnostics, from going to worlds of greater freedom. Gnostics disown everything that is regular and in effect. I don't know whether you recognize that in yourself - no doubt you will sooner or later - we feel a constant need to redirect our search in a new direction and that undermines the foundations of what is old and has already been discovered. That is the pilgrimage of the seeker for truth through the spiritual guilt of timeless wisdom."

I thought for a moment, and then nodded. Yes, that had been my attitude since I was very young; I subjected everything that the people around me and the authorities convincingly claimed to verification. I was surprised and somewhat jealous of Robinho. He was much younger than me, and he could express my thoughts and vague hints clearly and firmly. It had become clear to me a long time ago that if I didn't find a new path in the traditional teachings, I wouldn't be able to leave the old wrong ways behind.

"There's a question which bothers me, when did this pilgrimage begin?"

"This story begins in primordial times, when the question - who am I - emerged from the abyss of being into the light of consciousness. But, although it has a beginning, it's hard to see the end of that story."

14

I'd started to feel some benefit from the process I was subjected to on a daily basis. The burden I'd carried for so long was lighter, I felt better. I was meeting interesting people, enjoying the evening walks in Barcelona and the Spanish tapas bars and restaurants along the coast. However, although the process wasn't expensive, and the accommodation at the school very cheap, my money was running out. I started planning my return. I decided to sell the house and vineyard I'd inherited from my uncle as soon as possible and use that money to go back to Barcelona. I had no idea what was awaiting me.

"You've removed the main scars that affect your present life", Gunter told me. "Of course there are still some from your distant past, but they don't have any effect on your present life. You need to move to the next level of work, to become an instructor of Essenian processes. "

I knew from conversations with people from the centre that such a request would be made of me. They try to pull as many people as possible into their organization, to turn clients into instructors. That's how their organization was extending, that was a necessary process in order to cleanse the planet of exploitation, suffering and evil through Nemo's technology. "I'm not ready for that. I feel that there's still a lot of malevolence within me."

"You're wrong. Let me quote what the great Confucius said several centuries ago: If you hear anything, you can forget it. If you see something, you can remember

it. If you do something alone you will understand it. Only when you implement learning in practice will it become truly yours."

"I'm sure there's no better way to become familiar with something than to be involved in its creation. You're right, but I feel that I'm still not ready for that."

"That's a common attitude. When man successfully completes a process, he feels really good and wants to continue with it. The time has come for you to be independent and become an instructor. Our Teacher often emphasises: If you want to continue with your spiritual development, at some point you have to begin to teach others. "

I hesitated for few moments over whether to tell him that those words did not originate from their teacher. "Maybe your teacher does emphasise that, but Gurdjieff wrote that before your teacher was born."

Gunter's tensed jaw muscles jutted out, and Carlos, who was sitting on the side, said with a frown: "People say all sorts of things, and our teacher has been robbed many times."

"Many people steal from great teachers but, this time, Gurdjieff is the creator of those words." I was wondering if they'd ever heard of Gurdjieff.

Gunter was obviously restraining himself. With a great deal of tension in his voice he said: "Let's not argue about that. In any case, if you want to continue with your development you need to become an instructor."

"I'm pleased with the processes so far and I want to continue with them. I understand the structure of the process even without instructor training."

"So be it," said Gunter. We can easily check if you're ready by assessing your current state. Lie down on the bed and put the ring on your head."

I lay down as tense as though in front of some professor just before an exam. The conflict about Gurdjieff was just swept under the carpet. I felt cramps in my thighs and stomach.

Carlos, who had remained silent until then, began the process: "Start from the feelings which you experienced when you were drowning, and then think about your past. In your mind go as far back in the past as you can. Is there any experience that keeps you from acting like a free being in it?"

“I can’t feel anything. I don’t think there is anything.” But, at that moment, a picture flashed before my eyes, it seemed to be some Middle Age fortresses and a dry tree without leaves in front of it.

"What was that?", asked Gunter who was sitting next to Carlos in front of the screen.

"I don’t know. Some picture, but I couldn’t retain it. It disappeared immediately."

"Go to that moment and try to see it again. There’s a lot of charge there. The line on the screen reaches its climax. Really a lot of charge. We mustn’t leave that uncleaned."

"It doesn’t work. I bounce off it like there’s some invisible wall."

"When is this picture from?"

"From a long time ago, several centuries ago."

“Feel that moment and say exactly when it was.”

"Six hundred and fifty years ago." I was under the impression that I’d come out with six hundred and fifty years at random, but my hands were trembling and my fingers had gathered into fists that I couldn’t open. The

muscles in my jaw were clenched so tightly that they hurt. My breathing stopped.

"What do you feel now?"

"Terrible fear. Something horrible happened there. I'm falling apart."

"The only way to eliminate that is to confront it. Man is the master of everything he confronts, and the slave of all he avoids."

Carlos' voice sounded as though it was coming from underground: "Go to that experience. Tell me what's going on."

"I see that same fortress. A man is hanging from the tree ... a hanged man."

"What did you do?"

"I don't know. Something horrible. I feel terrible fear."

"Open your eyes," said Gunter infusing his voice with power. "Look at the two of us. We're here to give you support. We will go through this together. This experience is a dragon, but you will remove it through confrontation."

It took a huge effort to open my eyes. That image was horror itself, but it also had a great magnetic power, it attracted my full attention. They focused on me, concern evident on their faces. I remembered that in the material I'd read about spiritual scars the dragon was the expression of a large concentration of negative energy. In his whole past each man has two or three dragons. I had never encountered any until now. When a man is faced with a dragon he has a tendency to kill himself. In the panic which was overwhelming me, I wanted to ask them, what are you doing to me? Instead of that I just groaned, huge pincers were gripping me around the abdomen and chest.

"You see, everything is all right here," Carlos said looking intently into my eyes, but his voice trembled slightly. "Now go back to that experience and face it full on. What do you see and feel now?"

I closed my eyes, focused on the picture and groaning barely spoke: "That hanged man is me. I hung myself to put an end to my suffering."

"I understand," said Gunter. "Now open your eyes again and look at us."

This time it was more difficult to open them, my eyelids were stuck together in a spasm. They both seemed afraid and my fear erupted and overwhelmed me completely. I turned onto my side, curled up on the bed, and my voice turned into an inarticulate cry for help.

Carlos carried on: "Go back to the most painful moment of that event and tell me what you see and feel?"

Intermittently, groaning, I managed to spit out: "I can see myself stabbing a woman... then a child ... They were ... my wife and child." I jumped off the bed, took the ring in both hands, threw if off my head and headed for the door. Carlos and Gunter blocked the way and grabbed my hand. "Calm down, calm down!" one of them said. "Everything will be ok. Tara, Tara, give us the solution!" the other one shouted nervously. I couldn't recognise their voices any more.

With trembling hands Tara poured some green liquid into a glass. Holding me under the arm with his left hand, Gunter brought the glass to my mouth: "Drink this! You'll feel better." Bent over his arm, Karlos held my face with both hands, making it difficult for me to move my head. I started to swallow the sweet liquid which tasted like diluted cough syrup.

"Now lie back," said one of them. I didn't have the strength to resist or say anything. I was like a rag doll. I collapsed on the bed, keeping my eyes wide open. Whenever I closed them for a moment, the image that filled me with horror would appear before me – I was stabbing the child to death.

"Such things sometimes happen when you encounter the dragon," said Carlos in a voice which was not convincing. "You need to calm down and rest for a while."

"The processes don't help in such situations," added Gunter. He looked as though he'd regained confidence. "When you calm down, you should go for a long walk in the park or along the coast and everything will be ok."

The park, the coast, the thought of being alone filled me with dread. What would I do if such panic overtook me there? I tried to distract myself from that horrific experience by counting to one hundred and back, thinking about home and friends ... Each time a trace of that experience appeared fear would explode in me. Should I stuff myself with tranquilisers, should I run for half an hour or an hour until I dropped and just throw myself into bed and fall asleep?

"You're a lot calmer now," said Gunter. "You're ready for a walk. Go to the sea via La Rambla, sit on the shore, look around and you'll be fine."

I left the centre like a zombie without will or the ability to make decisions. There were a lot of people strolling to the coast and back along the wide street of La Rambla late that night. I walked very fast in order to tire myself out as soon as possible. I thought for a moment about getting a shish kebab at the Turkish kiosk, because fatty foods and meat close down psychic channels, but I immediately felt nauseous. I watched men and women moving slowly, laughing, talking loudly... There were no

such things in my collapsed world. Then I caught sight of a billboard advertising baby shampoo. It showed a mother holding a chubby baby who was smiling and I had an immediate panic attack. I sat on an empty bench, held my head in my hands as though I was thinking, and sat there for about ten minutes. I considered throwing myself under one of the cars which were passing down the side street and put myself out of my misery, but they were all moving slowly. I wouldn't manage to kill myself, I'd just be crippled.

Gunter's demand that I go for a walk to calm down became clear. They knew that people often kill themselves after encountering a dragon. Their processes were obviously powerless in such situations, and they wanted me to commit suicide away from the school, so they wouldn't have to deal with the police. In my desperation, I realized something else too. When I killed a child and a woman in that life, I'd put an end to my misery by committing suicide. That concentration of negative energy was not released through suffering then, but was artificially interrupted and now I was in the same horror from which I'd withdrawn then. That was the law of karma at work, as bitter as gall and now it had to be repaid.

I woke up with a severe headache. My mouth was dry, making it hard for me to swallow. I went into the bathroom and took a long drink of water straight from the tap. I put my head under the tap, wet my hair and water began to trickle behind my ears and down my chest and back. I sat down on the bed. At school they would probably be anxious, wondering what had happened to me. I hadn't

gone back to the centre the previous night; I'd taken a room at a hotel and spent the night there. Let them worry a bit, the bastards. But this thought didn't ease my pain.

Reading articles about past lives had seemed fun before and I'd wanted to experience them. The knowledge that those experiences can be unpleasant, even painful, hadn't swayed me. But nobody had ever written that your whole life might be ruined by one experience and that it would destroy me this way. Whatever process they might use to cleanse me, I'd feel miserable for the rest of my life for murdering my child. The thought kept coming back to me all the time - I'll never be happy again. There was no way to get over it. Talking with friends wouldn't help, I couldn't stand alcohol physically so I couldn't get drunk and forget the past, and drugs repulsed me more than anything else. The mere thought of food made me nauseous. The pain, sorrow, nausea and memory of it would accompany me wherever I went and whatever I did.

When I walked into the centre the girl at the front desk gave me a friendly smile and immediately picked up the phone. She was informing them that I'd shown up. I was going upstairs to the bedroom, when Tara approached me: "Filip, you should go to the teacher's room immediately."

I nodded without saying a word, and my heart started beating faster. I wondered what was awaiting me. My legs felt weak so I slowed down. Nemo lived and worked in this room. You could get in by invitation only. I felt privileged and tense at the same time. As I climbed the stairs I could feel the tension mounting in me.

On entering the room the pulsations in my carotid arteries were so strong that I could actually hear them. Nemo was sitting at his typewriter which was the size of a small piano, a frequent topic of conversation in the dining room and bedrooms. He wrote extensively so to make his

job easier his students, engineers, had constructed a special machine which saved him time. On several keys, instead of individual letters, there were whole words, the most frequently used in the English language such as "and," "but," "yes," "no," "always," "when," "never," "because," "this", "for this reason" and others. Beside him, with sheets of printed paper in her hands stood his secretary Nelly, a blonde from Lithuania with a high forehead and blue eyes.

He moved his head slowly and redirected his gaze from the keyboard onto me. He looked older than when he'd lectured in the hall. His hair, thinning on top, was damp and sticky. He kept his gaze fixed on me, without blinking, his face expressionless, but his focused alertness was obvious. It was impossible to raise an eyebrow or alter one's look in front of this man without his noticing it. If you blinked in a dark room, he'd hear it. I thought for a few moments about what to say to him: that his system leads man to the verge of suicide, that it's a complete failure, that I regretted ever having come to his school. He nodded silently as if he'd understood the state I was in telepathically and he simply said, "We'll fix whatever it is."

I shook my head. "Whatever process you use on me, I'll never be a happy man again. I came here to experience a higher state of consciousness, to develop myself spiritually. And what did I get? I'll be a wretch forever."

"I understand what you mean."

"You don't understand. If you did, you'd stop calling people to your teaching which you use to convert them into lost souls."

As I uttered those words I felt their truth, as though I'd detached parts of myself. At the same time I felt protected by his presence in some strange way. In that feeling there was no recognition of a divine presence, or the feeling of oneness which the people at the school talked

about, but one of losing myself in some emptiness where my desperation and desire to destroy myself melted away and weakened. I noticed that he wasn't looking at me in the usual way, focused on my face, but his eyes were out of focus, looking straight through me and behind me with a parallel view, which occurs while people are daydreaming.

He gestured towards the armchair in front of him. "In half an hour you'll feel differently. I have to explain the basics to you. You see, Filip, there are no negative feelings without negative energy or charge. That energy is now pressing on you like a huge burden and you're convinced it'll stay there forever. But it won't! When it's removed, the only thing that remains is the memory of that experience, emptied of emotion, like a faded photograph. Do you understand?"

"If that's the case, why didn't Carlos and Gunter remove that charge?" It was logical to ask him that. In a whisper I repeated: "I'll never be happy again." Although my despair had disappeared into the void that was all around me, I was convinced that I was speaking the truth.

"I understand you. Please, put the ring on. You can stay in the armchair. Nelly..." He nodded to his secretary. She approached and skilfully placed the ring on my head. I relaxed completely.

"Relax and go to the moment when you experienced that trauma."

The picture jumped into my mind without my having to search for it. "She follows me all the time."

"Go to the beginning of the event. Tell me what you see."

"I see my body hanging from a tree. Straight after there's an image of me killing my wife and son." As I spoke my throat tightened, the heat from my stomach started to

climb up to my chest and my eyes filled with tears. He continued to tear down my defence mechanisms: "Tell me what you feel about it?"

That question seemed absurd to me. What are you supposed to feel when you've killed your wife and child? "I feel horror, despair, the desire to kill myself and put an end to my misery."

"I understand. Now separate yourself from the event, as if you were turning your back on it and feel yourself here and now as fully as you can. **Here and now!** Tell me what you're experiencing?"

I tried to experience myself in the present moment, but the image of me stabbing my son with a bloody knife jumped before my eyes. "I see me killing my son."

"Not that! Try harder to completely separate yourself from that event and to **feel yourself here and now**. What picture do you see, which feelings and thoughts do you have and which bodily sensations?"

"I have a picture of this room, you and Nelly, I see your table ... I feel the tension in my body and I think that I've had enough."

"Very good. Now go back to that event in your mind and tell me what's going on. Is it as clear as it was, or is it fading?"

My despair had somehow dwindled: "It seems to be slowly fading away into the distance and is becoming fuzzy."

"What about the thoughts and feelings that accompany the picture?"

"They're also a little weaker."

"Come back to the here and now and tell me what's happening here with the elements?"

"Which elements?"

"The elements which make up the events here and now: the mental picture, the emotions, physical feeling and thoughts."

I found it easier to transfer to the situation here and now. That situation was also fading: "They're gradually fading away."

"Of course. They should have completely disappeared by the end of the process. Only the physical feeling that you're sitting here in the chair can remain. Now transfer in your thoughts and feelings to that event and tell me what's happening now."

"It's getting weaker and weaker."

"What about the feelings that accompanied it? They were horror, despair, the desire to kill yourself."

"It's more the memory of those feelings than the feelings themselves."

"Very good. Return to the here and now and tell me what's going on with this experience?"

"Well, that too is weaker, disintegrating, fading away..."

"Go to the event with your wife and son. Tell me what's happening there?"

"Almost gone."

"Very good. If it disappears completely and emptiness replaces it, tell me."

He continued to send me from one situation to the other. Their elements were disappearing quickly. At one moment the experience of the murder of my wife and son completely disappeared, and in the here and now all that remained was the feeling of me sitting in the chair. I felt

relief, lightness in body and mind, and at the same, curiosity about what had happened. And endless surprise, how was this possible? How could so much pain and horror disappear in such a short time?

"Pay attention to the next question," said Nemo and strangely, his voice now was filled with tension I hadn't felt during the previous process. "Are the wife from that experience and the wife from your current life related in some way?"

The emptiness which was filling me up spread with explosive power in all directions, so my personality scattered up and down, left and right, and along with a short scream, the words, "it's the same woman!", seemed to just shoot out of me.

"And the child?" Nemo said those words quickly and loudly, he almost shouted.

"That's my son," again I blurted it out without thinking.

Silence filled the room. After a while, Nemo said: "You can open your eyes. How are you feeling?"

"Completely empty, relieved...I don't know what to say."

"What about your problem? What about the feeling that you'll never be able to be happy again? Has it gone?"

I nodded my head, speechless.

"You might've understood what happened here. To perceive your drama as it is means to be liberated from it. We are enslaved by everything we don't experience consciously as it is. We free ourselves through the conscious experience of the truth. You may know Christ's words - you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."

He looked at me without the triumphant expression I'd expected. It was more like slight interest, a sort of calm curiosity. For a few moments I wondered how to answer him. The burden of the negative charge which he'd been talking about had left me, life was starting again from the beginning, and in my mind there was no space for permanent sorrow. I felt grateful to him for removing that terrible problem from me, but at the same time I was critical of the people around him who were incapable of applying his teachings.

"Nelly," he said, turning to his secretary. She handed him a sheet of green paper. He took it and held it out to me. "Read the first paragraph of this article."

He'd known how the process would end, and Nelly had prepared the material for me. The title of the text was printed in bold: "What is a copy": *A copy is an exceptionally difficult situation for the client. It exists when the client has committed a crime against some person in a past life, most often murder, and when that person is involved in a close relationship with him in this life. Such a relation often creates a dragon and requires extensive practical knowledge to resolve the undesirable situation."*

I kept silent for a while. He left me in that state. I was dumbfounded by that experience, but I also had vague memories of my sudden explosions of aggression towards my wife and Peter, which alternated with outbursts of great love. Those fluctuations in feelings now seemed crystal clear. That was the explanation for my contradictory behaviour, there was no doubt about that. When I'd pulled myself together, I said in a firm voice: "Thank you for this valuable experience. I have no words to thank you. However, I feel a certain criticism, not regarding your teaching, because it is precious for people, but regarding your role as teacher.

"Tell me."

"You're obviously able to eradicate such serious problems. But you haven't succeeded in transferring that knowledge to your students. Gunter and Carlos can't do what you can. "

He nodded. His face was sweaty and his eyes had lost that glow which I'd seen during his lectures: "The problem is that man doesn't just live his own individual life, but many more lives of his ancestors and future descendants in time and the cosmic matrix. In order to remove the charge in a situation like yours, great experience was needed. They're just acquiring it now, they're learning and are getting better and better."

"They have a lot to learn and a long way to go," I said at the door.

15

During lunch Robinho, who was sitting opposite me at the table, whispered through clenched teeth in a confidential tone: "If you want to see a ritual magic operation, come with me tonight. Pablo is a true ritual mage, there aren't many of them in Europe these days. "

I agreed without hesitation. I was in a good mood, full of energy, ready for new experiences. He seemed really pleased about it. "You won't regret it. How much do you know about ritual magic?"

"Just a bit of theory from books. I have no practical experience."

"That isn't necessary. It's important that you have strong nerves, because the operation of conjuration is not for unstable people. They tend to get scared at the decisive moment, start screaming, try to escape from the room and thus ruin the operation. "

"Don't worry about me," I said, and my mouth went dry.

I arrived at a stylish looking old building on the outskirts of Barcelona with Robinho and Pilar, a nervous middle-aged woman. We passed through a yard overgrown with rose bushes and entered a room infused with a strong smell of incense. It wasn't very big, but had obviously been used for ritual operations several times before. The floor was bare, just a well-polished light brown parquet. A double magic circle of protection, which covered the largest

part of the room, had been drawn with thick lines in the middle. An equilateral triangle of manifestation had been drawn outside the circle on a wooden base. There were Hebrew letters, whose meaning I didn't know, written inbetween the lines of the inner and outer circles. From this, as though from a spiritual fortification, the mage was supposed to evoke the desired cosmic intelligence to materialize in a visible form within the triangle of manifestation and answer his questions.

Within the circle, on a wooden tripod, there was a burner in which incense was smoking on top of a pile of burning charcoal. Large dark blue candles had been lit in all four parts of the circle, and there was a small wooden table in the centre with objects symbolizing the four magical elements. The mage, Robinho said his name was Pablo, looked nothing like you'd expect a ritual magician to look. He was a big, bald, very fat man in his fifties, with a greying beard, and his big belly and backside protruded from under his clothes.

Beside him stood his attractive young assistant with long blond hair, dressed in a simple black dress. In soft slippers, she was moving around the room quickly and easily. Apart from Robinho and me, there were two other people present: Pilar, the woman who'd come with us and a grey haired lady, the owner of the house, who was sitting in an armchair. Robinho told me in confidence that she was paying for the session, which wasn't cheap. As we sat down, Pablo nodded in greeting.

The conjuring of astral beings into visible form had become very rare in the last decade so I felt a tense curiosity as to whether Pablo would succeed. At the time of the origins of the magical Order of the Golden Dawn, such an operation was the candidates' test for moving to a higher level in the order's hierarchy. To succeed in conjuration, the ritual mage has to have a specific physical feature: the

ability to secrete ectoplasm, an ethereal substance which serves as the material carrier for the manifestation of the evoked intelligence. Thick smoke from burning incense or the blood of sacrificed animals is also used for this purpose. When the intelligence is invoked within the triangle of manifestation, it uses the incense particles and the operator's ectoplasm to form its visible body. Such a body can't perform any significant activities, but has to be visible and to be able to produce a weak voice so as to communicate with the operator.

Pablo pointed towards the door. That was obviously a familiar procedure, because the owner of the house slowly got up from her armchair and gestured for us to follow her. Upholstered armchairs lined the spacious hall, where we sat down. The grey-haired lady kept looking at her watch. I wondered how long we'd have to wait.

About fifteen minutes later, we entered the ritual room and sat down on the chairs lined up along the wall. Pablo wore long dark ritual robes, tied around his belly with a white rope. He and his assistant started to move slowly around the magic circle in a clockwise direction, chanting unintelligibly. They went around the circle of protection three times before slowly entering it. Pablo knelt down, closed his eyes and sank into deep meditation. His assistant was standing one step behind him, holding a lighted candle in each hand.

Ten long minutes later, the mage began the ritual of the pentagram, which I knew about from the books I'd read. It served to purify the psychic atmosphere of the influence of undesirable astral entities. During the ritual he moved about with surprising ease. He had a deep resonant voice, which was the only thing which fitted in with the image of a ritual mage. His words buzzed like a group of angry hornets in a beehive and the whole room seemed to vibrate.

I became very tense, and it was obvious that the others were in the same state. Although the operation lasted much longer than expected, and Pablo's voice had a hypnotic effect, my tension didn't abate. I was concentrating on the triangle of manifestation in which the conjured element was supposed to appear. When the assistant added a new handful of incense to the embers, the operator took a dagger from the table in his right hand and, in a louder voice, began the ritual of invocation requesting protection from Almighty God:

Thee I invoke, the Bornless one
Thee, that didst create the Earth and the Heavens
Thee, that didst create the Night and the Day
Thee, that didst create the Darkness and Light...

He continued to seek protection for some time, using many Hebrew expressions, and then, crossing himself after every few words, began to invoke the intelligence whose name was Balzeal:

"Under the wings of the Almighty God, I invoke thee, the spirit of Balzeal, I command thee with the sacred and famous names of Adonai, El, Elohim Sabaoth, Elion, Esher, Jah and Tetragramaton, to appear here, inside the triangle, in human form, with no deformities or delay, from whichever part of the world you come from and answer my questions. Show yourself here, I command thee in the name of the Eternal and Living God." His voice became stronger, he was almost shouting, "I invoke thee in the name of the one all creatures obey, the name of Tetragramaton!"

He continued his invocation in a deep voice which echoed around the room. At one point, he leant over the triangle of manifestation pointing the dagger in that direction. My concentration doubled. Through the thick cloud of smoke I thought I saw the contours of a human face.

It wasn't very constant, but kept appearing and then disappearing again. Pablo called out loudly, urging him to answer his questions, but there was no answer from the element. I looked at the assistant. Signs of the appearance of an astral spirit are the assistant's swaying and trembling, sudden loud cries and visible changes in breathing and body control which often make the candles fall from her hands. There were no noticeable changes in her. She was standing just behind Pablo, pale and stiff.

The mage repeated his request another two times, put the dagger in his left hand, and with the right one made a gesture of farewell and began to cite the words of spiritual release:

"Oh, spirit of Balzeal, I give you permission to leave without hurting any being or thing. Go, I tell you, but be prepared to return when I call you, when you are invoked by the sacred ritual of magic. I command you to retire peacefully and with dignity, and let God's peace reign among us! Go, go, go, I command you! In the name of Almighty God, I command you!"

That was the end of the operation. The tension in the air suddenly abated. We moved to the hall. Robinho sat down next to me.

"Are you satisfied with what we saw?"

I shrugged. I wanted to breathe some fresh air; I was half-choked with the smoke from the incense: "What we saw was interesting and it was very intense. But with this operation Pablo wouldn't gain a very high ranking in the Golden Dawn. The evoked intelligence didn't have sufficient stability, nor was any knowledge gained from it."

16

I was lying on my bed deep in thought, when I was interrupted by the voice of a girl I knew from the dining room: "Filip, you've been called to the guard room. Urgently! "

I wanted to ask what the reason for this call was, but she was already at the door. I went to the guard room through the dining room. People were talking loudly, but I didn't understand a word, all of their voices merged into an unintelligible hum. It would've been logical to call me into the séance room, but so far I'd never been to see the guardian of morality. As far as I knew, people were called for such conversations after a serious moral offense or if they'd been involved in a conflict with another member of the school. None of those reasons were valid in my case. I went upstairs, where that infamous room was located.

Before I knocked the door opened and Robinho came out. When our eyes met, he quickly looked away without a word. Something bad was waiting for me there. The door was open so I went in. Directly opposite the door a man I'd seen once or twice in passing was sitting at a desk. He was looking at me with his blue eyes from under a high forehead. His hair, which was thinning on top, was the colour of rye. Unlike most people in the school, who dressed casually or in sports clothes, he was wearing a dark blue suit and a bright white shirt with a red and blue striped tie. On the wall, above his head, was a large colour photo of Nemo.

He pointed silently to the chair in front of his desk. That movement and fixed facial expression, like a mask, reminded me of Nemo's look and behaviour.

The chair was still warm from Robinho's body. He stared at me for a while, and then said: "You're in our school to participate in the processes. You even had the honour of the teacher helping you at a difficult time. We're responsible for you. You're not allowed to attend any magical operations which may destroy our work."

I was surprised by his words. He knew that Robinho and I had attended Pablo's operation of conjuration. "Such operations can't destroy anything. It was more of a theatrical performance. As regards the difficult moment in which I found myself, you pushed me into it. I wouldn't have experienced it if I hadn't come to your school."

The muscles around his mouth moved slightly, as if he had a bad taste in his mouth. "In spiritual development man must confront his weaknesses."

My breathing quickened and tension began to take over my body: "If that experience was normal for spiritual growth, why did Gunter and Carlos fail to fix it, so Nemo had to do it?"

He narrowed his eyes: "At this point you know very little about that, so I won't engage in a conversation on that subject. Let's get straight to the point - while you're with us, you mustn't expose yourself to any other methods, or make contact with the people involved in them, or read such literature. Is that clear?"

The tension in my body had become almost unbearable. "Why? I want to you to explain it to me."

"Because I said so! And I'm the guardian of morality at the Essen school and responsible for the purity of knowledge which our teacher imparts to us. "

"I don't owe any such obligation to your school, or the teacher. I'm grateful for the help he gave me, but I paid a fair price for my processes."

"You're in no position to see how much you owe. Let me repeat - you have to put an end to these digressions, and that's that! "

"I'm a free man and only I decide what I do."

"You signed an agreement on your behaviour while you're at the school and now you're violating it. Do you realize how immoral that is? If you don't accept what I say, you'll have to leave the school."

"I'll think about what I'm going do," I said and got up from the chair. My face was hot and I could feel the sweat under my arms.

"Sit down! I haven't finished."

"But I have!' I said breathing heavily and left the room.

I went to my bedroom, unlocked my wardrobe and took out my bag. I took the Essen School application form from the folder where I kept my passport, money and return ticket. I scanned the text. The rules of behaviour for students were printed on the second page. It was only then that I noticed that at the bottom of the second page filled with large letters was the small print regarding the obligation which the guardian of morality was talking about. Bastards, I thought, these tricks are used in banks when you apply for a loan. I felt like a naïve fool. So far no one in the school had mentioned such conditions. It seemed that Robinho didn't know about them either, even though he'd been in the school for a few months longer than me.

He was sitting alone in the dining room, staring out of the window. It was the time for morning activities and the other participants were attending sessions, doing group

hatha yoga or Tai Chi. I sat down opposite him: "Do you mind?"

"No," he said in a depressed voice. "How did it go with Anthony?"

"The guardian of morality? The same as for you I suppose. Did you know we were forbidden to attend activities like Pablo's ritual?"

“Yes. I don’t know how they found out. Their sectarianism is a nasty thing. But there are worse things, so I'm wondering if I'm in the right place. It's not easy to leave. I’ve had the most valuable experiences in my life here, I’ve made good friends and I look on the teacher as God. Now it’s all fallen apart."

"It’s not so bad. I'm going home, I’ll think things over there and, if I want to, I'll be back. I can afford to be isolated from other teachings for a month or two. Then nobody will be able to control me."

"It's not that simple. What I found out about the teacher is really awful; I don’t really feel like talking about it. Then again, I can’t ignore it."

He had sparked my interest. Everybody is interested in the intimate details of a famous teacher. They boil down to three things: power, money and sex. I leaned across the table toward him and said: "I think I have the right to know."

Robinho hesitated for a while. "You know Mary, that nice English woman who sits over there during lunch, in the corner with the Scandinavians? She has short greying hair."

I immediately realized who he was talking about. You could tell that she was a refined lady from the English upper middle class. Composed of noble tissue, slim, with dainty movements and a gentle voice, she never laughed

out loud like most people in the dining room, she only smiled occasionally. Her elegant Chanel suits and Italian shoes stood out. I hadn't had a chance to talk to her and now I felt very curious. The guardian of morality had probably mistreated her by insisting on the rules because of some triviality.

"Of course. What happened? "

"You probably know that at the higher level of training they insist on absolute obedience to the teacher. It is said to be the test of someone's spiritual maturity. Well, that's where the abuses begin. Nemo ordered this woman to perform fellatio on three men. While she was satisfying one Nemo and the other two were watching. It seems incredible, but everyone's talking about it."

I was silent, stunned. I'm not a saint, but there are lines that can't be crossed. I wanted to say that this was a lie, but Robinho had good contacts with many people in the school and was constantly involved in intimate conversations. I hesitated for a moment. "That's probably a lie," I said. I had a strong resistance to their attempt to control my behaviour, but this was too much. "Who's talking about that, here, at school, among us?"

"A lie, huh?" said Robinho nodding, "Mary's sitting in the library crying. She won't speak to anybody. Can you accept that what happened to her was a test of spiritual maturity?"

"Are you crazy? That's the total humiliation of a human being. If this is true, I'm out of here. Such spirituality isn't for me."

Robinho's words ripped me to shreds. I remembered those statements about the divine light radiating from the teacher, about the living God who occupied his body, the grace we received by being near him. The Essen School no longer seemed like a cathedral of spiritual teachings in the

centre of Barcelona where aspirants were welcomed by Cardinal Nemo with open arms, but like a muddy pigsty full of stinking faeces, sperm and pus. Victor's face appeared before me. If this were true, I'd have to tell him when I next saw him, I'd smear him in all this filth, and all the water in the Danube wouldn't be enough to wash him clean.

"That's exactly what I think. It's good we saw each other. I'm leaving in ten minutes. Here's my address, if you want, write to me."

Farewells are usually sad occasions. I'd got used to Robinho. We shared similar views of spiritual teachings. I had to check the authenticity of his claim, although the feeling that this wasn't just some cock-and-bull story was slowly setting in me. I couldn't talk to Mary alone in the library, because two women and Alan, the man from reception, were sitting next to her. There were no expressions of comfort on their faces, their eyes were hard, their faces strained. "What do you want?" Kirke, a German woman with a pockmarked face and ash hair worn in a bun, asked me.

"I want to talk to Mary."

"You've nothing to talk to her about," Allen said sharply. "She needs rest so as to pull herself together and continue with her development." Mary looked up at me slowly. There were no tears in her eyes, but they were red and swollen.

"Alan, you mind your own business. I want to hear from Mary whether what Robinho said is true. He is, at this very minute, leaving the school because of it. If this is true, I don't want to be here for a minute longer."

"Leave me alone, please", Mary said drowsily. "I'm in no state to talk."

"I understand", I said. What they'd turned her into, a cloth with no will, without pride or hope. That was a spiritual crime of the worst kind. I went straight to the bedroom to get my things.

"Just a minute," said Allen walking behind me. "I want to talk to you."

"I don't want to hear it. I'm not interested in stories about a higher level of spiritual development through fellatio in front of others."

He showed me to the room where they kept coats, jackets and shoes. "Only two minutes, and then I'll wish you bon voyage."

We sat on plastic folding chairs. My limbs and body were stiff, as if were made of wood. I was wondering what tricks he had up his sleeve.

"You see, Filip, the level of spiritual development we achieve involves facing the limitations we have at a certain level. It's not all milk and honey, although it may seem so at first." His voice changed significantly, he put his whole self into the words. "Yeah, Robinho probably told you what happened. So what? Don't you realize that petty bourgeois morality is just a tight container in which many people are confined? It's a coffin for the freedom of human beings. In spiritual development man has to break it and get out. Do you understand me?"

"For me, spiritual development means only two things: the liberation of consciousness from illusions, so that I can truly see myself, other people and the world, and the implementation of that truth in life, as opposed to manipulation. The Essen School manipulates people in the worst way."

He acted as though he hadn't heard my words. "Filip, as long as we are chained to the world by the traumas

which were created by other people, mostly families, by unfulfilled desires, interrupted communications, pain and blackouts, in short by the scars created by the forces of evil, it is impossible to liberate consciousness from illusions." He spoke quickly, as though he was expecting me to interrupt him and leave. I stared straight at him. The fervour of fools for Christ was visible in his eyes. The sound of his voice and the glazed look in his eyes revealed the teacher's call to expose him to the most painful ordeals for the sake of truth: the crucifixion on the cross, being savaged to death by a beast, or removing a living heart. I felt uncomfortable. In fact, I felt afraid. I pulled myself together for a moment and said:

"I'm certain that forcing a devoted student to perform fellatio in front of others is not the way to raise her to higher spheres of consciousness. The divine teacher could have found something more acceptable for a person of normal morals and common sense."

With undiminished concentration, as if he hadn't heard me, he continued: "Fellatio? Discard the debris which false morality imposed on that act. A hand on a woman's shoulder is fine, poems have been written about that. The sharing of saliva, or a kiss – that is, poets claim, the most beautiful encounter in the world. But one part of the body in the body of another person is the reason to leave the path of truth!? You may know that Heidegger, who is the embodiment of rationality, wrote: 'In order to achieve true transformation and salvation, we must go down to the bottom'. Poor Robinho, he didn't withstand the test. He, like certain others, was taken over by conceptual exhaustion. Fruit takes a long time to ripen, but goes rotten all too quickly."

The fear in me was growing stronger. Whether that was a scar which had activated in this situation or common sense shouting in a loud voice over my ability for tolerance

- this wasn't a game for me. I found the strength to speak up, and to stick to my thoughts to the end, "Alan, I don't have a lot of practical knowledge, but I have studied many cults. In the majority of such groups, abuse of followers, sexual or financial, occurs: Scientology, Crowley's sexual magic, Swami Muktananda, Adi Da, Yogeshwar Mouni ... I came to school here, believing that it was the exception, but the same thing happens here. The great power of the teacher leads to great abuse. You say that Robinho didn't withstand the test, well, I didn't either. And that's why I'm leaving."

"As you wish. It's your decision. We can lead you to water, but we can't force you to drink."

"Of course you can't, because I won't drink dirty water. I'll look for clean water, even if I have to go to the end of the world for it."

PART TWO

1

Viktor was out of town when I got back. I spent my free time walking around parks. I'd sit on a bench far away from the people going over the experiences I'd had in Barcelona. Leaving the Essen school had left a bitter taste in my mouth, but the experiences from those processes became more attractive as time went on. Barcelona, the small restaurants and houses with wrought iron balconies with brightly coloured flowers hanging from then, gained in beauty through the haze of my memories. Opening up my past lives had given me a new outlook on life. My past life wasn't made up of separate experiences, but imposed itself in its totality, stretching towards the endless past. In it, this self of mine recognized itself and was confirmed by the experiences and places ripped from oblivion. I could go back in my mind to the worst of those re-lived experiences without any reluctance. They were no longer recollections filled with pain, fear and shame, but memories of a series of connected events which made more sense that my current experiences. All these experiences enhanced my awareness of what I already was.

I spent most of the time in solitude. Short conversations with friends were the only moments when I resurfaced in the superficial world to take a breath before returning once again to the depths of true life, the thoughts about my experiences, my numerous selves in the distant past and contacts with the cosmos, both pleasant and unpleasant. That would sometimes calm me, like childhood and adolescent fantasies, and then I'd be overtaken again

by a feeling of futile loneliness, which was obviously my inability to be alone with myself. I felt like the last spectator in an empty stadium after a game.

My thoughts kept returning to Nemo. Such spirit, in which many people saw the embodiment of divine light and yet such depravity. These two characteristics seemed completely at odds. For me that was a puzzle without a solution, but a puzzle that you could see in the lives of many cult leaders and spiritual teachers. Yogeshwar Muni, an American whose secular name was Charles Berner, often emphasized the need to control sexual energy and he claimed to have been celibate for many years. He wasn't, according to his closest students who left him. On the contrary, he assaulted the novices in his ashram in California and later in Australia. Muktananda had intercourse with the young daughters of his students, who closed their eyes to his behaviour. Joshana, the leader of a mystical cult in San Jose, California, treated her pupils for drug addiction with sexual magic even though she was in her seventies. There were similar rumours about Dimitrije Mitrinovic, who had a small group of devoted students in London and Sai Baba who was followed around the world by millions. The opponents of Rudolf Steiner claimed that he assaulted his underage stepdaughter. An endless succession of spiritually prominent people had been accused of sexually abusing their followers.

I found this information in many books from my library. I had a lot of theoretical knowledge, but until I went to Barcelona I'd never experienced what that was like in everyday life. When I finally stepped into the dramatic atmosphere of personal experience, I was rejected by it in a tortuous way.

I visited my ex-wife and my children who were living with her. Petar was eight years old, Maria six. I reflected on my failure to visit them immediately after returning from

Barcelona. When, while sitting on a park bench, I evaluated my relationship with them in detail, I came to the conclusion that I wasn't a very good father. I was overtaken with sadness combined with a sense of coming to terms with fate. A good father would've rushed to see his children and hug them immediately on arriving home. But I just phoned them and sat around in parks mulling over my problems. My unhappiness was transformed into feelings of alienation and solitude. I tried to find excuses for my behaviour. I seemed to be silencing my own conscience.

I'd obviously alienated my children. After greetings and kisses they focused on their gifts and didn't pay me any more attention. My wife greeted me with restraint and remained aloof. We exchanged empty sentences like dead fish. What had happened to a friend, what the other had said. I followed her short statements absently, and while I talked she kept looking at the children or threw brief glances at the watch on her wrist.

I wanted her to ask me what I'd experienced in Barcelona, but she seemed totally disinterested. I promised the children that I'd take them to the zoo the following week, kissed them and went back to my small apartment. I was supposed to sell the vineyard and the house that I'd inherited from my uncle in the village of Homolje where my mother's family was from. While I was in Barcelona, I'd decided to use that money to pay for my further stay in the Essen School. Now I decided to give some of that money to my ex-wife to take the kids on a summer holiday, or for me to do that.

Thoughts about my children, reviewing my life so far and self-incrimination did nothing to calm me down. Apathy, depression, lack of will to make any effort, the feelings I always experienced when I felt let down. I wondered how long this state would go on for. Then, suddenly, a thought came to my mind – Great-Uncle Ivan. I should go

to see him in Homolje, many fond memories from my childhood and youth reminded me of my stay with him. Over time those memories had become more valuable. Now, going to stay with him seemed like finding a port in a storm. I threw my things into a suitcase, put Swami Vivekananda's Raja Yoga and a pack of smuggled tobacco on the top and two hours later I was on the bus for Homolje.

2

Ivan was my mother's uncle, my great-uncle. I felt closer to him than to the other members of my family. My mother's other relatives were all dead, so he lived alone in Dubolina, a small village near Zagubica. Most of his neighbours had emigrated to Austria and Germany for work, so the country houses were as empty as a toothless mouth. It had once been a beekeepers' village, but now Great-Uncle Ivan was the only beekeeper left.

His house was made of mud mixed with straw, and the walls were white washed. The floorboards were painted yellow, which you don't often see these days. The dark wooden furniture which my great-uncle had made himself contrasted with the colour of the floor. There was a small spare room built onto the house for storing food and firewood. He lived peacefully in his small empire, whose image was impressed in my memory, with three goats, his dog Sharko and his bees.

To call Great-Uncle Ivan a beekeeper was an understatement. There was no separating him from his bees, it was an indestructible unity. The bees recognized him and, dare I say it, understood and loved him. He knew how to talk to them and did that in a voice full of tenderness, as though he were talking to his grandchildren. Sometimes he sang them simple songs that I've only ever heard him sing, and those melodies harmonized with their buzzing.

Although he'd only completed primary school, he knew something about the statements made by historical

figures on the subject of bees: Pythagoras, Aristotle and Virgil. He claimed that bees had been around man from ancient times. "They have a soul," he would say with great conviction. "On Christmas Eve the buzzing from beehives is the loudest, not because of Christmas Eve, but because of much earlier pre-Christian findings about the equinox, when darkness begins to retreat, and they celebrate the coming of light."

“The bees told me” he would often say in a voice which allowed for no trace of doubt in the truth of his words.

Great-Uncle Ivan used to make honey brandy. He’d pour it into old glass bottles and seal them with wax with his stamp which looked like an old Egyptian ankh. He’d give those bottles to the small number of friends and relatives who occasionally visited him.

Sometimes he’d let the bees sting him in places which were acupuncture points, although he didn’t have any theoretical knowledge about that. I believe he first heard about acupuncture from me. He used to call bee venom a sacrificial poison, because bees die once they sting. "When the bee venom gets into those places", he told me several times, "man steps into timelessness and places outside this world. Our ancestors knew not only to cure themselves with bee stings, but also to find their way to fairies, pixies and ghosts. What you call yoga - I read a book that you left here – is far below this knowledge. I’d call that bee yoga, because it allows you to become one with the big world, which is invisible to other people. "

He greeted me as if he'd known I was coming. "Oh, little Filip, welcome. You haven’t been here for ages." He stood in front of his white washed house, next to the old walnut tree, smiling. He was over eighty years old, but he looked the same as when he was sixty. It was obvious that

he was old, but his skin was smooth, without wrinkles, except around the eyes. His eyes which had once been dark now had that elderly bluish circle around the irises. He was fit and full of energy, in spite of a limp. That was his souvenir of the shrapnel from the Austrian cannon that had hit him when he was on the Macedonian front. Since then, as a war invalid, he'd received a pension for many years. His shirt, made of rough linen, was unbuttoned to the waist, revealing a tanned chest with the odd grey hair here and there.

He hugged me and said: "Let's have coffee. Would you like some honey brandy?"

I took the packet of tobacco smuggled from Herzegovina from my rucksack. He'd never refuse such a gift. We sat under the walnut tree on three-legged wooden stools. I took a sip of honey brandy and nodded my head in respect. There was no honey brandy like it anywhere.

"The spirits they serve in pubs these days are poison. No bee would go near them, but they swarm around my honey brandy. The ancient Greeks used to call it ambrosia or nectar, and believed it was the drink of the gods."

He opened the packet of tobacco, sipped his coffee from an old tarnished cup and started to roll his cigarette. It was a ritual I remembered from childhood. He would never light up a cigarette with a match or a lighter, but with a piece of smouldering tinder. He would set it alight with the spark from the metal flint. He would find the tinder in the woods, cook it and dry it before use, and bring the flint from the river banks. As a boy, I tried several times to light up the tinder in that way, but in vain. And now I was still fascinated by the ease with which he did it.

"How are your bees?"

I knew he was going tell me something interesting. Bees were an inexhaustible source of stories, descriptions

and fairy-tale-telling for him. He often called bees the bee nation. He had a better opinion of them than of people. He knew nothing about astronomy, but he loved to sit on the large stump in his orchard and observe the stars. It was at such moments that he told the most interesting bee stories. And now his words were filling me with contentment.

"The bee nation", he said looking up at the sky, "came to Earth from the stars. Bees are clever. You can see what is good, and what is evil from their behaviour. They're creatures of goodness and light, that's why the devil eats everything except honey, and can't stand the smell of wax. I put a bee on my bad leg to sting me, because their sting heals, but she won't. She turns her head and tries to sting my finger. Bees are a source of hidden knowledge. They can pass on great wisdom to you. To deserve that you must become one of them. There is no other way. You'll never find out who and what a bee is until you become one of them."

I bit my tongue and stopped myself from asking him how to do that. I held back, it was too early for that question. I was sure he'd tell me sooner or later.

He continued to speak slowly, thoughtfully, inhaling cigarette smoke during the pauses between words: "Here, in Homolje, bees are called honey beetles. They're sacred insects which connect our world with the underground or parallel world; the farmers in neighbouring states call them God's small servants or God's little messengers, and they believe there will be a huge disaster if they're killed." With the tips of his fingers, yellowed from tobacco, he flicked cigarette ash into the roughly carved stone ashtray and continued: "They have special knowledge about the future. It's essential to inform the bees if the head of the house passes away and also if someone from the family gets married. If that isn't done, they'll die or fly away."

When Great-Uncle Ivan worked with bees there was something priest-like about him, as though he were performing a ritual in which he reached a superhuman level which was perceived only by him and the bees.

As a boy I saw him bring bees back from mortification. When the temperature dropped suddenly, the bees' wings would be paralyzed and they'd fall to the ground unable not only to fly, but also to move about on the ground. Great-Uncle Ivan would take such a bee gently in his hand, bring it closer to his mouth and breathe on it. The bee would start to move its feet first, then to shake its whole body by moving its wings and finally it'd fly away.

During my previous visits, I'd learned strange things about bees from Great-Uncle Ivan, things I'd never heard from anyone else. Smiling with his ruddy cheeks, he now proceeded to pass on such knowledge: "A sexually innocent girl - and there are very few of them these days - can pass through a swarm of bees without any of them stinging her. Sometimes girls cast love spells with bees. On St. George's Day, they put their shirts on the hive overnight, to make boys moan for them like bees do in the hive. Beekeepers rarely get sick, especially from cancer and other diseases with a fatal outcome."

I calmed down completely. His simple life combined with rays of spirituality and the mysterious atmosphere of Homolje seemed to be having a positive effect on me, and his words had a penetrating power which reached deep within. I sipped the honey brandy from a tankard and listened carefully. I'd never heard so much information about bees at one time. He'd usually tell me one or two things. Now, the words were gushing from him. He spoke slowly, in an ordinary voice, but the striking impression was that he was imparting firm truths. "If a death occurs in the family of a bee owner, it's advisable to approach the beehives and say 'Golden dwarfs, your master has died'

three times and in that way ensure good health and longevity for the other family members. A piece of cake should be left next to the hive, as though it were being given to family members. Also, if the hive needs to be moved, the bees should be told first. Harsh words, especially swear words, should not be used near a hive."

"Great-Uncle Ivan, someone told me that if a bees buzzes around the house, that's a sign that a guest is coming."

"It is often a sign. One was buzzing around for a while before you came. If it flies around a sleeping child, which is rare, it's a sign that the child will have a long and happy life."

"Obviously, there are no similar beings on Earth," I said, feeling convinced. His words opened up a world I'd known nothing about until now.

"There's another insect which also carries cognitions of other worlds" he said, nodding thoughtfully. Thoughts were rushing around my mind in an attempt to figure out which insect this was. I was sure he meant ants. He stopped moving his head for a moment, looked at me and said: "It's the dragonfly. It passes on the message that the world is illusory, because its wings vibrate so quickly that man can't catch those movements. Some old people I talked to link the dragonfly with fairies. They say that if you follow a dragonfly in flight, it'll take you to the fairies. But I've never become close to them. Bees are my love."

3

I went to the orchard early in the morning. Great-Uncle rarely cut the grass around the fruit trees, so it had grown up to my knees. I put on his rubber boots so as not to get wet and found a dry log to sit on. The sight of his whitewashed fruit trees had filled me with happiness since early childhood. He was a grafter too. The farmers from the surrounding villages often called him to graft their fruits because word had spread that he had a good hand. Many of his fruit trees were old species that have disappeared in recent years. The old man tended them with love, and spoke with contempt about the new species which were planted densely one next to the other and after ten years, when their fertility waned, were ploughed by tractors and other fruits planted in their place.

In front of me was an apricot tree onto which he'd grafted a plum. Its fruit was big and round like an apricot and dark blue like a plum. The taste was a mixture of those two fruits. The vibrant cherry tree had been my favourite as a child. He'd grafted a white cherry tree onto a red one and its fruits were like little zebras, with red and white stripes. Its ripening time had passed; there was no fruit on that tree.

I climbed up the gentle hill to the stone between the two beech trees below which there was a spring. Great-Uncle used to love that spring, and I believe his short stories about water fairies were tied to that spot. I sat on a rock in the sun which was dry and warm. From that point there was a clear view of my grandfather's orchard and,

through the tree tops, the white house. It had been my favourite place in my childhood. Nothing had changed. Great-Uncle was old and, although he was vital, he didn't have long left. What would happen to his grafted fruit trees and his bees? He had no children and he was going to leave his property to a nearby monastery. Would there be someone to go to the hives and say to the bees: Golden dwarfs, your master is dead? I was overwhelmed with grief at the very thought.

The smell of coffee was wafting from the house. "Let's have breakfast. You don't want a brandy, do you? "

He placed smoked bacon, cream cheese, cottage cheese, goat yogurt, a few large tomatoes, coffee and brown bread which he baked himself on a small wooden table. "This is real food, not like that stuff you eat in the city. When I visited family the last time, I couldn't eat your tomatoes. As tough as old boots, and when you cut them, there's no smell at all. You can smell mine all the way up to the spring. "

He smoked while we ate. "Try the bacon." He leaned over it, and added: "You won't find better in the whole of Homolje."

I shook my head: "There's a lot of cholesterol in it. It's not good for you at your age."

With the hand in which he was holding the cigarette Great-Uncle pointed to the bacon and said, smiling: "I love everything that isn't good for you, and I've made a deal with my age."

We sat in the orchard in the evening, relaxed, as if we had all the time in the world. He was on his walnut tree stump, I on a small rug leaning back against the old pear tree. The stars were twinkling above us. He told me how, as a boy, he got his first hive. When he approached it, the bees started buzzing loudly, and he felt that they'd accepted him

as their own. Then he suddenly said: "If you're ready, I'll introduce you to the bee nation tomorrow."

Mild anxiety stirred in me at his words - if you're ready. He hadn't given even the slightest hint of what I was supposed to do to get ready. I'd never heard him say that to any other family member, nor had he ever mentioned that there was a process of initiation into the bee nation. At the same time I felt joyful excitement, and the expectation of a deeper understanding of those wise creatures. I took a deep breath and pushed my back against the pear tree, feeling the roughness of its bark. I said to myself: Everything will be ok. Mixed with dread, I was caught by the feeling that I was privileged to have this opportunity and I shouldn't miss it. That feeling and the atmosphere of Homolje filled me with something I could call divine spirit, because quiet religious sentiment arose in me. I was illuminated by a vision of revelation and ubiquity, in congruity with the divine, in complete harmony with the earth and the world above us.

The touch of Great-Uncle Ivan's hand on my shoulder woke me up in the morning. "It's time."

It was dawn, and the sun hadn't appeared over the horizon yet. The grass in the orchard was damp with dew. I heard a nightingale singing in a tree, and that filled me with happiness. That night I'd slept fully clothed, so I just pulled on my rubber boots and set off behind my great-uncle. We came to the hives. Beside them was a low bench where we'd sometime sit. He pointed to the ground in front of the bench. There in the short grass, was the number eight which seemed to have been carved with a sickle: "You need to follow within the lines. Try not to think about anything in particular. Don't expect anything to happen. Simply move. What will happen - will happen. If you feel dizzy, stop for few moments, and when you feel better, carry on."

"Should I move from left to right or in the opposite direction?"

He smiled, and he seemed to be doing so with his eyes only: "If you follow the eight, it isn't possible to move in one single direction. You'll start from right to left, but when you get to the second part of the eight your movements will go in the opposite direction, from left to right. See?" He drew a figure eight in the air with his index finger and the alternate changing of directions became apparent. I hadn't noticed that until then. I stood hesitantly, and he spoke up as though he was giving me a more detailed explanation: "You probably haven't noticed that bees don't usually fly straight except when they fly to the pasture. Most of the time they move in the form of a figure eight. Few people are able to understand that allusion. The number eight consists of a circle that goes clockwise and another circle that moves in the opposite direction. Those are the sides of the sun and the moon. For thousands of years, bees have been sending a message to people - there is this world and there is a parallel world that is invisible to humans until they open themselves to it. Man resides in the place that connects those two worlds, but his eyes are wide open to this world and closed to the adjacent one. When they fly bees consistently direct him to open his eyes and see that other world. The adjacent world is a mirror image of this world. In fact, there is duality in the entire universe, and also in man."

I was listening carefully. I'd accepted a long time ago that there are opposites in the world and in man. But on that occasion, speaking slowly, he pointed out information that I hadn't connected with the game of opposites: "You see every man sees his Odyssey. On his life path man must constantly pass between Scylla and Charybdis. They are the symbols of the opposites which torture man. Even the pleasant contrasts poison man's life."

When, in a situation when you're expecting something significant to happen, someone tells you certain things, they tend to gain strength and seem to contain hidden secrets. His words acted like a series of individual revelations which gained increasing weight as they multiplied. What he said then, in a deeper voice, stressing each word, provoked some kind of shock in me: "Here too opposites are present: honey and the sting at the same time. But that isn't the end of the lesson bees offer us. Your other self exists in the adjacent world, the adjacent I, which is waiting to merge and join the other. It's like a hand that is being held out towards you, and you actually shake hands with yourself. Mouths which kiss themselves. That self, which you spend your whole life seeking is the same self which is also searching for you, but you were separated in the ancient past for the joy of reunification. "

These words worked on me like the deepest wisdom of an enlightened yogi. They had the penetrating power of a stonecutter's sharpened chisel. I was surprised because I'd had no idea what secrets were hiding within my great-uncle, and at the same time I was angry with myself, reproaching myself for not coming to see him earlier.

With a finger dipped in honey, he began to draw a figure eight on my forehead. He dragged his finger along the same path several times. At the same time there was a rumbling sound coming from deep in his chest. In order to stop the sensation of waves in my head I focused my eyes on him. His eyes spread out over my entire field of vision and now those were the eyes of giant bees. I saw his finger approaching my face. He spread the honey over my three acupuncture points: between the nose and eyebrows, next to the eye and then under the eye. Then, he took a bee from a small glass jar and placed it on the first point. It stung me, but the sting wasn't painful, it was more like a feeling of numbness in that part of the face. Then he took out

another two bees and placed them next to and under my eye so that they would sting me there too.

I wondered what I'd look like the next morning. His method reminded me of old Chinese acupuncture therapy. Before they inserted the needle into the patient's body they'd sometimes dip the tip into bee venom. This not only cured people, but also transferred them into another world, beyond our space and time.

"Go!"

I began to walk slowly along the narrow path in the grass. I moved awkwardly, because the figure eight drawn on the ground was small. My feet went over the lines. Soon I began to feel dizzy. His words about the other world flashed through my mind. I wondered what was going to happen to me. His face, the fruit trees, and the grass on the ground began to merge into a sort of wobbly wall. I focused my attention within. There he was again. I saw myself in him, not like in a mirror, but in the timeless space behind the mirror. I thought it would be easier to move around with my eyes closed, but as soon as I closed them, I lost balance and almost fell over.

"Take a deep breath through the nose, inhale through the nose and continue."

I stopped for a moment and took a few deep breaths.

"Go on, you feel like you're going to fall, but you won't."

At one point, as I moved along the lines of the figure eight, I heard a low rumble, as if it were coming from far away. It suddenly occurred to me that a swarm of bees was approaching me attracted by my ritual movement. When I opened my eyes I saw Great-Uncle sitting on the bench with an expression of elation on his face and his eyes closed. The rumbling sound was coming from his chest. It

was a deep sound, something between a humming and buzzing which came and went in waves. My mind opened up. Images, verses I'd heard and historical scenes I'd imagined when I was a child started to appear to me.

The contents interchanged quickly, although I tried to hang on to some of them. Then, a strange picture suddenly appeared before my closed eyes, remaining there motionless for some time as though it had been carved out of wood. On a hill overgrown with low grass stood an angel stretching out his arms towards the valley at the foot of the hill. He radiated a blistering white light around him, lighting up the whole hill and the thought went through my mind: hill of light, hill of light... A large group of people, with their heads thrown backwards and their hands raised towards the angel were kneeling at the foot of the hill. A strong sense of belonging to this scene overtook me, as though I'd experienced it once before, and then forgot it.

While I was wondering about its meaning, one of my early childhood memories emerged from the darkness. It would occasionally appear during meditation, but I'd always ignore it as irrelevant. This time it was accompanied by great excitement and a physical reaction akin to being startled by a sudden sound. I was making newspaper balls in my grandmother's room. My mother was next to me. I heard her saying that she was going to work at the post office, and that I should keep making those balls all afternoon and evening until she got back. At the end, she promised that the angels would come to take me to heaven if I was good and made those balls until she came back.

This was quickly followed by an image of my mother, when she returned from work, squatting next to me with a surprised look on her face and, in front of us, beside the tiled stove, the pile of balls I'd made. Mother opened the stove door, and threw the whole pile of balls onto the glowing charcoal. Huge flames burst forth filling the whole

room with a yellow-white light, giving me a sudden feeling of elation. This image occurred at high speed, as if an invisible hand had passed across my field of vision with a wide paint brush, instantly painting the entire picture. A moment later I focused my attention on my mother's face. I was waiting for the angels to come and take me to heaven. Then she told me, smiling kindly and warmly: "You should be this good not just today, but every day, and then the angels will come to get you."

There was a bitter taste in my mouth because of unfulfilled expectations and deceit. Those feelings were present now too and with the same intensity, although both visions had disappeared into the void. I seemed to be walking along the edge of that void, and I felt I would fall and disappear into it at any moment.

At that moment, my mind suddenly began to expand, as though a silent explosion had occurred at its centre. It spread further and further away from my body, far from Earth into the vacuum of the cosmos. At the same time I had an awareness of the tiny nucleus from where I'd set off. I spanned the smallest atoms to the largest and farthest galaxies, further and further away... At one point, my expansion and, along with it, all movement, stopped. I was in a vast ocean of light and I could see in all directions. I was dissipating, my body and my mind had disappeared, and there was only one spot from which I was experiencing all this. Then I heard Great-Uncle's voice from a great distance: "Look all around you...What do you see?"

"Only light... and ... everything is me." That was the truth. There was no difference between me and the endless light, we were fully assimilated.

"Does any field of concentrated light attract your attention?"

Any speech seemed superfluous. Everything was as it should be, there was no need to add or subtract anything. I could barely speak, and in a weak voice said: "It's all me...those are all parts of me."

Great-uncle's voice became stronger as though it was coming from somewhere near: "Take a good look, does anything capture your attention?"

"Yes, some concentration of light, as if the light is stronger there."

"Good, Filip, that's good. Now in your thoughts and feelings get closer to that condensed light. Get right up close to it and focus on it. "

I did it. I don't know exactly how I did it, as it seemed I'd only been thinking about it for a second and I was already in front of that shining light.

"Now concentrate. Ask it in your mind: Who are you?"

I did as I was told. The concentrate of light shimmered for a moment, and then the answer came, not from it, but from me. No, it wasn't an answer, but clear consciousness: That's me! I said to myself in one breath. I heard Great-Uncle Ivan saying something from far away, but I didn't understand his words. I wanted for a moment to consider that other me, which existed there like my emotional reflection in a spiritual mirror, but we instantly melted together and became an inseparable one, that nothing and no one would ever be able to separate. At the moment of our joining together, I was instantly filled with unearthly happiness accompanied by the strong buzzing of cosmic bees. That marked the return to myself after eons of painful separation, loneliness and searching. Endless light, which was the core of my being, flashed from the influx of energy, serenity and fulfilment. It's hard to say how long I was in this state, when I was startled by my great-uncle's words: "Open your eyes, Filip."

I struggled to lift my eyelids. I felt slight disappointment as the state I was in subsided. "Why didn't you leave me in it ..." I had no words for the feeling I'd experienced. I was swaying, unsteady on my feet, as he approached me, took me by the arm and led me to the bench. I could feel the rhythmic motion in my head and I couldn't dispel the images I was seeing.

"Everything comes to an end, Filip," said the old man. He sat down on the bench next to me with a calm smile. His face with its crooked nose, high cheekbones, tanned skin and slanted eyes seemed beautiful to me.

"What are you thinking about now?"

"I'm remembering that you told me to hold out my hand to someone I was looking for and, in fact, I shook hands with myself, that I was the lips which kissed themselves. Yes, it was myself that I was looking for my whole life."

"That's what happens when you become one with the bee nation. It's sad how few people are given the chance to experience that. You need to lie down and get some sleep. You did a great job today. You might have strange and beautiful dreams."

"I'd like to find out what was going on in this adjacent world all that time that I spent here searching for it."

He smiled and nodded his head several times as if this question had once bothered him, and had then been clarified. "You won't find anything about what's happening in the adjacent world because that's a timeless world, time doesn't exist there. There's no space either. Everything is there and everything is now. The only thing you can feel is why you were separated and that reason is the same for all people - for the joy of reunification. That's why one wise man said that no one realizes how beautiful it is to travel until he comes home."

I was astonished, confused and delighted with the way he'd opened up completely new spiritual horizons in so few words. They surprised me, not because of their content, but because of the way he expressed his thoughts. They sounded like the statements made by New Age spiritual teachers such as Nemo. Great-Uncle Ivan didn't express himself that way during the time I remembered, in my youth, when I visited him in the summer. I had the impression that I was playing the main role in an ancient Greek mystical drama which leaves the audience wide-eyed and breathless.

"This soil has powerful emissions, and people often have dreams and experiences here which can only be experienced in other places once every few years or never. Psychologists see them as instinctive forces; people like you and your friends see them as messages from spiritual teachers. And when you live through all that and you get to be my age you realize that we all send ourselves our dreams, our teachers and all the knowledge that can be born at one moment, without burning out." He opened his eyes wide as though asking me if I understood, and added: "Your soul doesn't speak to you loudly or clearly. It pushes signs before your eyes in an effort to awaken the knowledge buried within you. All your experiences, all the people you meet are the symbols through which your teacher, your own soul, talks to you."

4

After my initiation into the bee nation my evening talks in the orchard with Great-Uncle Ivan were experiences filled with a sort of childlike joy. The warm summer night, the stars above us, the birdsong and the initiation experience which had left a strong impression on me. This strange happiness tinged with grief was enough to bring tears to my eyes. I loved it most when he mentioned adjacent worlds, my other self from a parallel universe and the mystical creatures which inhabited the Homolje mountains: howlers, fairies and elves, vampires... He talked about them in detail as though he were reading a mythology study. I didn't want to be rude so I didn't ask him about his experiences, but one night I couldn't help myself, "Have you, Great-Uncle, ever seen any fairies or elves?"

"Yes," he replied as though he didn't attach great significance to such experiences. "Homolje has a special atmosphere, and many people in this area have had similar experiences because of that. Sometimes they are just ordinary events from life, but the local atmosphere makes them seem mystical. Did your mother tell you about the experience she had in her youth when a farmer thought she and her friend in the creek were fairies? She probably talked about it for years. "

"She never said a word about it."

"Well, I'll tell you then. It happened in the creek in Lisicja Gully. It was a long time ago, when she was 16 or 17 years old. She was a member of the Sokol organization,

something like the National Youth or the scouts during the communist rule. They had their tents set up above Lisicja Gully. They camped there for ten or fifteen days. Your mother was a mischievous little devil; she and her friend - I don't remember her name - would sneak out of their tent at night and go down to the stream for a swim. Well, one night while they were in the creek, they heard the squeaking of an oxcart. It was an old farmer who'd brought his oxen to the creek for water. When they saw him, he was already close, so they couldn't get out of the creek and run away. I don't need to tell you how scared they were. The old man saw them and came closer to the creek. They were hugging each other, up to their waists in the water, trembling with fear. He watched them for few moments, crossed himself, turned and took his oxen away. Whatever you said to this man, it'd be hard to convince him that he didn't see river fairies, wouldn't it? "

"I'm surprised my mother never told me that."

"But fairies and elves do exist," he continued slowly. "Anyone who has lived here for a long time believes that." He poked the small fire which we'd lit to get rid of the mosquitoes, put a twig on it and said: "There are different types of fairies. Water fairies live near streams, mountain lakes and water mills. Mountain fairies live in the hills, often hiding from prying eyes in caves or hollow beech trees. Some of the old people told me that there are fairies who live in the clouds, but I've never met any of them."

He spoke with frequent pauses. It was one of those nights you remember your whole life. Above us falling stars were shooting across the sky, in front of us red-yellow embers in the fire. Songbirds were calling to each in the dark. Great-Uncle Ivan used to call their singing a sweet mantra and you couldn't find better words to describe such a sound. Moments you want to last forever. Then he would

open up and talk about my favourite events and phenomena which had a strong mystical component to them.

"Homolje is a special place because many underground energy streams intersect here and generations of people have grown up on this land. The energy in the air is so compressed that you can almost hear it crackling. No wonder the Vlach's magic preserved its original power, which has been lost in European countries. And the honey here is stronger and healthier than in other regions. Yes, in favourable circumstances you can meet fairies, elves, and sometimes even vampires."

I didn't want to interrupt the flow of his speech by asking questions, so I remained silent. For me, his every word was as precious as gold.

"Fairies are young girls with long, flowing hair, dressed in thin white floor length dresses which trail along the ground. That's how they hide their long legs from people when they meet them. Along with so much beauty they also have that animal element - instead of human feet they have hooves, which look like those of a horse or goat. Only their feet reveal their inhuman nature. Their hair is always light in colour, sometimes golden and their lives are bound to it. If only one of her hairs is pulled out, a fairy will die, because even though they live for thousands of years they are not immortal. To live so long they eat garlic seed. When they tire of life, they just reject it and fade away peacefully and without pain."

He took a puff of his cigarette, exhaled through his crooked nose and continued: "Forest, water and mountain fairies are closely related. Legend says that forest fairies are the oldest. Spring fairies live by springs, lakes and streams. Mountain fairies are usually located in the mountains next to forest springs. In some places spring water is called fairy water, it never dries up and that water has healing powers,

because it is consecrated by fairy spirits. Untapped water located in the depths of caves also has healing powers. The water which falls on a millstone has the greatest magical power. Sorceresses, or as people call them, fortune-tellers, ask their clients to bring mill water. They use that water to divert black magic from their clients, driving away the evil intentions of their archenemies. Fairy water has such power too. Fairies are ready to socialize with people and, don't laugh, even sometimes to make love with them."

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask him if he'd experienced that, but I held back. I said, "Are elves their counterparts?"

"No, you can't mix them up with people. They're small, ugly, and look like the drawings of dwarfs in children's books. Sometimes they help lonely farmers in their work, but if you hurt them, they retaliate nastily. They mostly hide from people. If you meet any of them around here, remember this: Don't look away! The human look nails them to the spot. If you turn away for a moment, they'll disappear. But beware; this is not for the faint hearted.

"I'm sure my heart would stand it."

"Fairies are mostly benevolent and of a cheerful nature. They often gather in fields to dance. You must have heard about the fairy circles in the grass."

"I've read about them. It's just superstition. The explanation of their origin is simple: young mushrooms gradually spread out, and the old ones die off in the middle of the circle and this is presented as a fairy circle in the grass."

He gave me a superior smile: "Whoever wrote that obviously hasn't seen a single one. Fairy circles often appear in the field up there, above the spring, and I've never seen a single mushroom there in twenty years. If you

come across a fairy circle, don't step into it. You'll get seriously ill."

"I believe this to be true. One journalist, who studied the customs of the people of this region for years, especially Homolje magic, told me about a man who was trying for months to meet the fairies or elves. He visited the places where people used to see them, and when he finally came across a fairy circle and stepped into it, he was scared to death... That night he went half grey."

Great-Uncle Ivan smiled briefly without opening his mouth. He winced and a sound came from his chest, something like "mnn" and said: "For such people, you say, why are you pretending to snorkel when your bottom is sticking out of the water?"

It was getting late and darkness surrounded us. Nothing moved. It's hard to say how I felt. Not because I don't remember that experience – it's still present - but because I don't have the words to describe it. If I try to, I feel as though I'm translating words from another language.

My initiation into the bee nation resulted in my opening up to experiences which had previously been inaccessible to me. I became more emotionally open, and my openness enabled me to perceive those life phenomena to which I had formerly been blind. I was instilled with the strong belief that I should seek less in the world around me, and more inside me. Deep layers of truth lay there, untouched so far, waiting for their tracker to step in them, as in new spiritual snow and to shovel them away.

A few days after my initiation, I had an experience I'm talking about for the first time now. I kept quiet about it for years so that people wouldn't declare me a liar or schizophrenic. Had it happened to me in some other place, it would have seemed less and less real over time, but being close to Great-Uncle Ivan, with the energy radiating from

his house and orchard, Homolje's surrounding hills and diluted air, it gained full power and became deeply imprinted in me. That morning I was chopping wood for my great-uncle. He stored the logs in straight lines behind the house and the tree trunks in the yard. I would, in the old-fashioned way, use a sledgehammer to bang metal pegs into the middle of the trunks. When the tree began to split lengthwise, I'd widen the cracks with thick wooden pegs until the tree split open. I'd then repeat the process with the halves, and cut quarters with a handsaw.

I'd been trying to work at a relaxed pace, but after two hours I was tired and in a sweat. Great-Uncle kept the water for washing in front of the house in an old sooty tank in the sun. By noon the water had lost its morning chill, so I poured it all over my head and body. I felt good, even though chopping and sawing the wood had exhausted me. I put on a clean t-shirt and hesitated for a moment. I wanted to be alone to sort out my impressions. That was when the golden bee appeared. It was flying in front of me in a figure eight, coming closer and moving away again as though it had some sort of a message. I felt like it was calling me and I went after it. We went down the gentle slope towards the spring and, with each step, the belief grew in me that there was a close and deep relationship between us, established during my initiation into the bee nation, and that I should follow it without thinking. When we got to the spring it flew up high and disappeared into the tree tops. I was sure that this was its way of telling me that it had done its job.

I drank the freezing cold water, my teeth chattering, and sat on a rock in the shade of a branchy beech tree. The fatigue slowly seeped out of my body, there was no movement around me, and everything was quiet. I felt a universal connection with nature. From the smell of the mountain plants in the morning sun which filled my nostrils and lungs reaching all the way down to my feet, I

became part of the meadows, beech trees and springs. I could hear Sharko barking in the distance. I remained deep in thought for some time. It was time to go home. I was supposed to see the potential buyers of my house and vineyard, and I didn't like that. I avoided confrontation with people in negotiations. I was thinking about how I could extend my stay here. I looked up and felt a blow to my plexus. An elf was sitting on a round stone next to the stream.

He was small, perhaps one meter high when standing up straight, male and very old. At first I thought it was a boy from the village, but his grey hair and wrinkled face reassured me in a second. He had tanned skin with deep wrinkles, unusual clothes made of rough grey cloth, and a thick leather belt. I didn't see what he was wearing on his feet.

While the pressure in my stomach grew stronger my eyelids clenched, and I tried to sharpen his image. He was there, watching me curiously and somehow mockingly. I tried to say something. This effort was reduced to a chaotic and unsuccessful search for words. For a moment I thought I could hear a sound coming from the elf, it wasn't a question but more like a gasping noise from the depths of his throat. Then I heard Sharko barking happily nearby. I got up off the stone to stop him scaring the elf, but he was already trotting towards me wagging his tail happily. When I looked at the elf to see if he was scared, he'd gone. For a while I was overcome with disappointment. I remembered Great-Uncle Ivan's words never to look away from elves not even for a moment. I'd been so close to that valuable contact, relationship, knowledge, and it had slipped away so quickly.

5

It was time to go home. I delayed that moment for a few days because I'd never had so many lovely experiences within such a short time. Before coming to Great-Uncle Ivan's, I'd felt that my life had radically changed during my stay in Barcelona through the experiences I'd had there. Now my life had undeniably changed for the second time. It was a time of precious irretrievability. I was unwilling to leave Homolje; it was like tearing off the most valuable part of myself.

The opportunity arose to return to Belgrade by car and thus avoid the long journey on the old bus that stops at numerous stations to pick up occasional passengers. Danijel, a forestry engineer whom I knew only superficially, offered to take me in his car. Vera, a young woman who was also supposed to come with us, brought me a message from him. She openly showed her interest in me. In these areas when you're a doctor, even an unemployed one, you are a gold medal for every woman who manages to marry you.

Something very strange happened to me then, for which there is no reasonable explanation. It was the last in a series of experiences in Homolje and there was no doubt in its truth. The thought was growing at the back of my mind that this experience was connected with my spiritual opening after my initiation into the bee nation. I didn't experience it alone, there were four of us and it was the same for all of us. When we discussed it later, our experiences almost completely coincided.

We were on our way to a village ten kilometres from Zagubica, where Daniel had a house. No one lived in it, and he visited it from time to time. Apart from the three of us, Daniel's wife Draga was also in the car. There were no indications that such a strange thing was about to happen. We talked about everyday things and mostly joked. We were driving along a country road where there is almost no traffic, no lights at night. The only light was coming from the headlights on Daniel's car. At one point, when we came to a flat part of the road we saw a person in a white suit in the distance who seemed to be strolling down the middle of the road. "Look at this fool, where does he think he's going," said Daniel. "As though there's nobody here but him." He beeped on his horn twice and the sound seemed very loud in the silence of the night.

The pedestrian in white didn't move from the middle of the road, or look back at us.

"He's deaf," said Daniel, and pressed on the horn for much longer this time. The man continued to move down the middle of the road as though he hadn't heard us. We drove closer, and Daniel braked just a few meters away from him. The man was wearing a bright white suit, which was unusual for this place and time. Daniel beeped once again. At this point, the man, or it might be better to say, apparition, turned his face towards us and continued walking. His face was creepy. As white as a sheet, with an open mouth and shining eyes. He laughed out loud making his big white teeth stand out. There was something sinister about his appearance and laughter. A blob of saliva protruded from between his upper and lower teeth, shining in the headlights, and his blue tongue darted about between them. Daniel's wife screamed. After my initiation into the bee nation I'd believed that nothing could ever scare me again. Now I froze, breathless, pushing backwards

against the box in which Daniel kept the road maps. At that moment, the man in white jumped up and disappeared.

"Vampire! Vampire!" Draga shouted. I couldn't say a word. Daniel was the first to pull himself together. "Now he'll be waiting for us at the next bend," he said in a shaky voice. We sat for a while unable to move. When we'd calmed down, we started talking about what we'd seen. Our statements all matched. Only Draga claimed that the vampire's eyes had shone with a reddish light, but the three of us hadn't seen that.

"It was Belisha", said Daniel. "That's the vampire who peasants sometimes used to see on these roads at night."

I decided to describe this event to Great-Uncle Ivan in a letter, hoping that he'd give me more detailed information about Belisha. My great-uncle wrote to relatives very rarely, so I was prepared to wait a long time for his letter. I never got it. He died ten days after my return from Homolje. He was supposed to be buried by villagers from the surrounding area because he didn't have any relatives nearby. I decided to go to the funeral, then after that to go and check on his bees and to say in front of his hives: "Golden gnomes, your master has died."

6

For some time after my return from Homolje I was obsessed with thoughts about bees. When I found out about my Great-Uncle's death, after the initial disbelief, I had the strange feeling that this was the best possible farewell. After my initiation into the bee nation he lived in me, he was present all the time. In terms of the power of experiences, my stay in Homolje was equal to the strongest experiences from Barcelona, and I was changed forever. I only felt sadness when I thought about what would happen to his bees and goats.

I brought Sharko to my apartment. He was used to open spaces, and being confined by the walls of my room made him noticeably sad, as much for his freedom as for Great-Uncle Ivan. He would cheer up only when my children came to take him for a walk and to play with him in the apartment. They'd started to come almost every day so, thanks to Sharko, we established a deeper relationship.

The bees grew in me and I was sometimes surprised by the experiences which originated from such a relationship. I bought a few books about beekeeping and flipped through them quickly. There was no mention of the mystical life of the bee nation in them, and that was all that interested me. I caught myself, when in a relaxed state as my thoughts wandered, starting to quietly hum and that sound soothed me more than the meditation I'd practiced in previous years. Then the idea came to me to create a hitherto non-existent type of meditation - bee meditation. It would consist of humming and buzzing with a simultaneous focus

on the produced sound. I believed I could pass it on to the people I was close to, because it was simple, and had a profound effect on the human being, which I saw from my own experience. I started practicing it regularly in the evenings and mornings, but I would unconsciously begin to hum and buzz during the day too.

I remembered the sound formulas of the old Gnostics that I'd read about a long time ago in a book about Gnosticism. It took me a long time to find this book, which I'd cursorily read, on my crammed shelves. My hands were shaking as I read. That was it. I'd hit the nail on the head! From the time of early Christianity Gnostics used sound formulas which were basically humming and buzzing in order to reach higher states of consciousness, and finally be able to leave this planet and go to worlds of greater freedom. The two main sound formulas were "azom" and "omazu".

In my regular bee meditations I began to use those formulas alternately. The omazu formula seemed to have a more powerful effect on me. I said it under my breath, humming and buzzing, and the omazu formula quickly transferred me to an altered state of consciousness. I can't say that it was a state of higher consciousness, at least not at first, but I certainly felt very strange. Ooooo-mmmm-aaaaaaaaa-zzzzzz-uuuu... Very soon I'd lose all sense of time and place. I felt as though I was rocking in a chair, the margins of my body disappeared, and my head seemed to be expanding in space, creating the impression that I was in several places at the same time. Those places were not palpable in a material sense; they were states of concentrated vibrations. My head was a huge hive spread to the farthest boundaries of the universe. Within it were the planets, stars and stellar nebulae, and at the same time I had a clear awareness of tiny creatures scattered throughout the universe. I gained insight into the sexlessness of bees,

the hexagonal form of honeycombs and the healing power of honey. I wondered what to expect if I continue to extend these periods devoted to bee meditation.

I was prepared to offer a rationale for the value of such work to my friends who shared similar interests, but that was unnecessary. That's when I first realized the law of attraction. When people who are at a certain level of spiritual maturity feel the centre of energy, they are automatically drawn to it and willing to accept its vibrations. Friends started to ask me what I'd experienced in Homolje and although they received only curt replies from me, the next inevitable question was whether I could transfer my experiences to them.

I informed a group of eight people that I'd be holding a three-day course on sound formula in my apartment. My living room was big enough to accommodate that number of people sitting comfortably in pairs during meditation. I determined that each exercise would take about forty minutes, the time needed to burn the sandalwood incense sticks Easterners lit up in their temples. I asked the participants for a small fee. It wasn't important in this situation, but I'd learned long ago that people don't appreciate the things you get for free. I decided to start at eight o'clock in the morning, and work until seven o'clock in the evening, with two short breaks and a longer one for lunch. I expected to get the job done in three days and I chose a Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

I was excited about the course and felt full of energy. The night before it was due to begin, however, I had an unpleasant reaction. The thrill had gone, and depression had taken its place. I wondered why I'd become involved in an activity I knew nothing about and what was in it for me. Such questions kept bothering me throughout the evening and a good part of the night so I couldn't sleep. Before dawn I came to realize what the source of these questions

was. Fear and nothing else. Fear that I'd fail and embarrass myself in front of my close friends and my experiences in Homolje would be the subject of ridicule. In the best-case scenario, at the end of the course the people would avoid my eyes, they'd hastily pick up their belongings and leave, criticizing and making jokes at my expense in my absence. I eventually fell asleep at dawn.

All of the participants were present before eight in the morning. Andrija and Petar, the doctors I used to work with in the hospital; Amelia, a psychiatrist whom I met two years ago, who shared my interest in the world beyond; my nephew Dejan, ten years younger than me, who saw me as an older brother who knew more than he did; Stojan Milanovic, a young man with whom I'd had many long conversations and who'd been borrowing books from me for years, Vera who I met in Homolje and two friends from my youth, Pavko and Slobodan.

Both of them were interested in the world beyond, we'd sometimes discuss theosophy, anthroposophy and famous yogi's teachings late into the night. I felt slightly tense at the thought of Pavko's unusual sense of humour which I considered inappropriate for such a course. I remembered when Nikita the Russian had introduced us in front of his gate. It was a hot July, and Nikita's uncle was sitting under the mulberry tree in the middle of their yard. He was half-naked, cooling down with his feet in a bucket of water and a wet handkerchief on his head. His chest was covered in grey hair, and his pectoral muscles sagged with old age flab. They looked like an old woman's drooping breasts. Pavko suddenly said, "Hey, Nikita, tell your uncle, I'll give him a hundred dinars if he lets me grab his tits." He might blurt out something similar at a sensitive time during the course.

I banished those thoughts, focused and said: "The goal of our course is to achieve a higher level of

consciousness. What this state will look like, you'll soon find out."

They sat in pairs and watched me full of expectations: that all events in life would become clear, their shortcomings removed and they'd become stronger and better people, capable of expressing and receiving love. For a moment the thought occurred to me that, instead of promises about higher consciousness, I could tell them that they'd be introduced to the mystical life of bees, but that thought withdrew by itself. The state that they'd experience, if they worked properly, would be something else.

I briefly described the technique: "You'll work in pairs. One partner will say the sound **omazu** out loud or under their breath. That should be a drawn-out mumbling and buzzing sound. Like this: **Oooooo-mmmmmaaaa-zzzzzzzuuuuu**. But, while saying it you should try at the same time to feel it as fully as possible. So, the formula we're using here is: say omazu and feel it at the same time! Then tell your partner what you've experienced. This is the first phase. In the second phase, which follows immediately after the first one, you need to focus on the infinite universe, however you imagine it. Again, tell your partner what you experience, and so on until the end of the twenty minute period. Then your partner will start doing the same. And so on until the end of the exercise, which is about forty minutes."

I originally wanted them just to concentrate on omaza, but I remembered the words of a famous English occultist: Always keep in mind that this is a bipolar universe. Great-Uncle Ivan told me the same. My memories didn't stop there. The instructions in New Age materials often cite the words of Christ: When two or more gather in my name, I am among them. The proverb - a fig facing another fig becomes fertile – also came to mind. All those

memories led me to the decision that the course technique must be dual. Oneness is the path to a higher state of consciousness, and to reach that two phases are necessary, the passive and active, the yang and yin, omazu and the infinite cosmos. If you want to escape the mortal embrace of duality and step towards oneness you have to grasp both sides.

During my omazu meditations I gained valuable insight into the nature of duality and oneness. One of God's countless attributes is oneness, and duality is a symbol of evil. Among people its symbol is the devil. His head has two horns - an obvious symbol of duality. Linguistic analysis suggests the same. Our word devil comes from "diabolo" in which “dia" means "two" and "bolo" or "boljo" means to put, place. So, what was one is placed in two parts.

I was surprised at how quickly they started applying the technique properly. The whole room was filled with buzzing sounds. The pictures on the walls seemed to shake. It embraced me too; I could feel the vibration in my plexus. Their eyes were closed, the call of the bees was coming from their clenched mouths and chests, and their experiences were deeper and deeper. I began to feel satisfaction and was overtaken with the conviction that I was doing the right thing.

At mid-day, after taking a lunch break, the participants started to fall into crisis. Amelia, the psychiatrist I mentioned before, sat on the chair in front of me. She looked at me intently for about ten seconds, leaned forward and spoke quietly, "Tell me honestly, is this your first course of this type?"

She’d lost confidence and wanted support. I spoke to her through gritted teeth, "No, I held two in Homolje. Don’t worry, everything will be fine. Just keep it up!"

The skin on her freckled face was wet with sweat, her hair stuck to her forehead, and her blue eyes had lost their usual clear colour and become bleary: "The first phase goes easily. But when I concentrate on the cosmos I feel fear. There's an endless void before me into which I disappear completely, if I let myself go, there's no more of me. It scares me that I might cease to exist. "

"That's an integral part of this technique. Sooner or later everyone will feel that way. The goal of all spiritual systems is for man to experience oneness with the cosmos."

Then Pavko approached me. He was glassy-eyed and seemed to be looking right through me, with deep and rapid breathing and an unhappy expression on his face. Even at such a moment, his sense of humour hadn't abandoned him. "I feel like crap." He held out his arms towards me with open palms and shaking fingers and said, "Look, my hands are shaking like I've fucked an orphan."

A few minutes later, Dejan began to scream. He looked like he'd seen an unknown beast. The screaming was replaced by painful groans. His partner was afraid and started to pull back in his chair. I stood behind Dejan and told him loudly: "Don't be afraid. Go through it!"

My voice sounded confident, but doubt had begun to build up in me. What if some of the participants lost their minds? My legs were weak, and I made my way back to my chair by holding onto the wall with my hands. The situation was deteriorating rapidly. Five or six participants were in tears and crying out for help simultaneously. All the liquid drained out of me. I poured water into my dry mouth and throat, but that was of little help. For a brief moment I thought I'd start screaming too. I lost all track of time, and I don't know how long it was before the participants calmed down. They mumbled the formula less frequently, and the periods of silence after the buzzing were getting longer.

Their statements had begun to resemble the words of the Zen practitioners from the books I'd read.

My colleague Andrija was silent and thoughtful for a while and then he approached me. With an enigmatic smile, shaking his head slowly he said: "What omazu, what universe, there's only me!"

I focused my gaze on his amber eyes: "What happened?"

"That's what I'm telling you. There's nothing but me. I experienced myself as a divine creator. I said the first word, omazu, and the whole universe appeared. I remembered what it says in the Bible: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' That's it! God is one with the word he uses to create the cosmos."

I didn't really know what to say to him: "Very good. Keep working."

"There's no point in carrying on. Everything has been said, everything given, everything is as it should be. Thank you for this precious experience." He leaned over and hugged me.

After him Vera approached me. "I'm having very strange experiences. I've heard that the people around are having similar ones."

"Who's having those experiences?"

"Well, we are. I can hear what Amelia, Dejan and Stojan are saying." She started to describe her experience so fast that I could barely keep up: "At one point I had a terrifying vision. It was a landscape in Latin America, Mexico, or some similar country. In front of me there was a stone pyramid with a chamfered top, I don't know exactly, something like that... I saw a young woman, almost a girl, tanned skin, dark hair and eyes, whose hands were tied

behind her back with leather straps. She was surrounded by people with painted faces, dressed as priests. I heard the distinctive sound of drums and the girl's voice begging for mercy. She spoke in what was to me an unknown language, but I understood every word with which she begged to be spared. Then I realized it was me."

"How do you know it was you?" She jerked impatiently: "There's not a grain of doubt. It was me. At one point I entered that body, I saw the priests from within. I was terrified."

This was no act, she was petrified. Her pupils were dilated, her breathing rapid and the words were gushing from her, outpacing each other as if there wasn't enough time to say everything she wanted.

"What happened then?"

"One of them, he was standing next to me, had a large knife in his hand, and I saw him swinging it over my head. At that moment I left the body. It was as though I'd suddenly risen up and flown to the stars. My body remained below, my chest open, that man's hand was holding my heart, and there was blood everywhere. I heard the mantras the priests were chanting and a buzzing sound. It sounded like our omaza..."

Vera grasped her forehead in her right hand, so that her face was partially covered: "I felt relief, freedom, a release I'd been looking for my whole life. Yes, that's it! Freedom! Boundless freedom and love. I heard one word echoing around the endless space, the word which originated from our omazu. It was as if God himself was saying it. It vibrated through the whole cosmos. I know it means eternal love which exists forever between spiritual beings. It sounds like Spanish - arelena."

I leaned toward her, like a dog with a sharpened sense of smell who has tracked the scent of a wounded

deer. The word arelena had come to me in a similar way during the processes in Barcelona and it was unequivocal, as if it was carved into the granite panel. I'd also heard it in talks with a small group of people who were involved in the Gnostic Intensive. Their leader had come to it first, and then the others. That's love between two beings who recognize the truth in each other. It's not the perishable love between two Egos. It was a strange synchronicity – that several people, when they open up emotionally at the same time, come to similar cognitions, even though they are not in contact. I felt myself questioning Vera's experience: "Are you sure you haven't heard that word somewhere before?"

"No! It's the sound, the vibration, which pervades the entire cosmos. It is the superior form of existence. Arelena - I'd love to be able to express that sound the way it resonates in me."

I was overcome with emotion, my throat tightened, and I had to make a huge effort to control myself. Vera's mouth was contorted, and tears flowed down her face. This was not some flight of fancy; she'd been part of a real experience compressed with energy.

"What happened then?"

She blinked, wiped her face with her hand and said, "It's hard to say what happened then, because everything was happening at once, some great, ubiquitous NOW. An exclamation of joy arose in me at rediscovering the wonders of the spiritual world that I'd once experienced and then buried in oblivion. I felt euphoric that all the worries, fears and pain of the earthly world were behind me. At first I felt I was alone, that I was expressing arelena towards the cosmos and taking it from there, and then I became aware of other beings." She frowned and closed her eyes searching for the right words: "Some of them looked

like transparent airy bodies, and some like concentrates of light and energy. They were all parts of one, of one entirety. I really don't know how to describe it."

"Did you go through the luminous tunnel people talk about?"

"Not the tunnel, I saw light all around me and in it some concentrates of light which were stronger than the light around me. Those were conscious beings. I communicated with them telepathically. Then I entered the next life. "

"What happened before you entered it?"

"I don't know. I seemed to fall into a deep sleep. The next thing I was aware of was the image of Earth, two beings in coitus. I was strongly attracted to that sight. At one point, I was sucked into it and that was the end of the experience."

Although her experiences had a mesmerizing attraction for me, I had to cut the conversation with her short, because I noticed that some of the other participants were squirming on their chairs looking in my direction. That was a sure sign that they wanted to approach me. I told her: "Vera, your experience refers to the period between two lives. The same elements are described in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. If you have similar experiences again, after the course, write them down immediately, because they quickly lose their original vibrancy and clarity."

The next to approach me was Stojan. He spoke in the same agitated voice as though it was a matter of life and death. He was sitting stiffly in his chair, looking not at me, but through me, to some other dimension, "By following this technique, I had the impression that I'd touched something deep inside me, something of value for my whole being. At one point, when I opened my eyes, the light in the room had changed; it was much stronger than

before, as if light bulbs which were not there before had been turned on. I fell into a state of ecstasy which I have no words to describe. I felt like I was on top of a huge mountain where a strong wind was blowing, a wind made not of air but of pure spirit. Then the life-affirming thought that I was finally free exploded in my mind. I don't know how long I was in that state. Just before the end, from the very depths of the cosmos, a very pleasant sound, like organ music, which I now recognize as piora, began to reach me. It overwhelmed me entirely. I knew what it meant immediately - the truth! There was a feeling of love at its core, because love and truth are the same. The sound and feeling of truth and love echoed around the depths of the cosmos. "

"When people open themselves up enough, they have deep experiences and the cosmos begins to speak through them," I said, and those words were the undeniable truth for me.

He looked at me curiously for a moment and said: "Filip, how did you know we'd experience those words?"

"Some experiences happen to anyone who is prepared to dive deeply enough into themselves."

Zoran, my friend from childhood, had the experience that excited me the most: "I felt I was a giant bee which created this world by buzzing. I felt I was leaving this body. In some other situation, I'd have experienced this as the end of my existence, because I previously linked death with the loss of vital energy and consciousness. Now I know that's not the case. When we leave our body, our life energy merges with the life of the whole cosmos and our consciousness expands. Death is not an eclipse, it's enlightenment." He leaned over to hug and kiss me.

The participants approached me one by one with similar statements. Most of them had the impression that

everything disappeared except them and that by chanting the omazu formula they created the universe. Amelia's experience was complete: "I had, Filip, the undeniable impression that omazu is the magic word which, when directed into the void of the universe, evokes, like an echo, the secrets of life, the world and the self that others don't know, and it extracts them from the depths of the cosmos and declares them. This made me think of what Michel de Montaigne said, that every man carries the totality of human existence within himself."

I'd had many discussions with Peter over the years. He came on the course because he wanted to see what I was wasting my life on. He was a rational person, and tried to explain everything by means of physiology and the electro-chemical processes of the brain. Sitting on a chair in front of me, he stated his intellectualizations as though we were continuing our previous discussions: "The vibrations we produced obviously create pinoline in the brain and that's the basis of parapsychological phenomena. I hope that, after the course, we can all get together to discuss our experiences and see what the common denominator is. However, I'm interested in why the phenomena occur in this way and not another. I feel like I'm going deeper into myself and in that way am able to get through to the furthest boundaries of the universe. "

The words they uttered were those of legends, myths and ancient rituals, originating from pre-mythical layers of consciousness, hitherto unseen connections between everything that happens in man, nature and the cosmos. To reach the deepest wells of consciousness it was necessary, obviously, to penetrate the ancient archaeology of language, the roots and inception of words.

Late in the afternoon I rejected the idea of running the course for three days. It was obvious that the lemon of experience had been squeezed to the last drop. I was

surprised to hear identical statements from the participants: "It's over! There's nothing more to experience." Stojan Milanovic, the chattiest of all the participants, said loudly: "I feel like a bottle filled to the top. Nothing else can be poured into me."

I decided to stop the course. I felt relieved, as if I'd made my way through a field full of dangers which could spin out of control at any time.

"I need to say a few words. We've reached the end of our course. I'd planned for it to last three days, but we've already done all the work. You had dramatic and valuable experiences. You'll need some time to sort through your impressions. So will I. I need to confess something. This was my first course of this kind."

"I knew it!" shouted Amelia.

"It was the first one, but it won't be the last. I'm convinced that this is a valuable thing, I hope you are too. Thank you for participating. We might meet again sometime under the same circumstances."

The omazu method, sound, formula, I don't know how to call it, holds within itself a void that absorbs a thought, a feeling and some wonderful vibration which it then sends back to the seekers, thus making each of them an accomplice. I became convinced that my cosmic bees omazu course was worth its weight in gold. At that moment, I decided to continue to run it and to spread it among people. Then the thought crossed my mind that after the omazu I should try concentrating on the arelena sound even though there was no buzzing or humming in it. It was more like the soft rustle of silk. I was filled with pride at being its creator.

7

What had happened during the omazu technique? I'd had unusual experiences during my initiation into the bee nation and later during my meditations at home, but the profound experience that I am the creator of the universe, that I'm creating it by chanting the omazu formula was absent. The old Gnostics, who used that formula, hadn't mentioned such an experience either. I felt a hint of jealousy towards the people from the course, because I hadn't shared their experiences. On the other hand, none of the participants on my course had experienced liberation and leaving the Earth, which happened to the Gnostic Perates sect, and which was why they used that formula. Their name, perates, means ferrymen, or those that know how to cross over to the other side. It was probably necessary to use a sound formula for a large number of times in order to leave the Earth.

I concluded that it was necessary to continue to run this course in order to clarify certain things. I also realized another thing. By listening to the vocal communication of my participants, I concluded that **omazu** was the first word which God used to create the universe and not **om** as the Hindus believe. Then I realized, somewhat later, that the root of the word omazu is om. **Om-azu**. It was strange that I hadn't noticed something so obvious straight away.

On gathering my impressions I knew I was in a state of elevated energy, there was no doubt about that. I was trying to separate myself from them and assess what had happened with a clear head. The overall impression was

that the feeling of I was ubiquitous and extending like some permanent substratum. Nothing could be imagined where that wasn't present. The nature of this experience was the most similar to the feeling of all-permeation, and the expansion of knowledge was based on it. New knowledge resembled the enlightening of darkened spaces with expanded consciousness. The essential feature of those experiences is that they have nothing to do with identifications, but appear like sudden expansions of consciousness. There was no longer "I am this or that". I always remained I, but something new could be said about it now, something that didn't fit in with the previous identification. Chanting and experiencing the omazu sound was accompanied by primordial astonishment at its own experience – There I am in everything!

When I remembered the words of a certain poet – we haven't said the right words yet, but it's important that we haven't forgotten the language – I thought, with a short-lived feeling of superiority, that he should come to my omazu course to say the right word. Its value, and I created it by some miraculous coincidence, was in that during it the seeker is transformed into the finder.

8

In the following days many people who'd heard about what had happened during the course approached me and expressed their desire to participate in the next one. There were more than I could accommodate in my apartment. The participants from the first course contacted me too. They wanted to repeat their experience. I assumed that they were expecting even deeper and more meaningful experiences, the ultimate solution to their problems, a complete spiritual experience beyond which there is nothing more left.

Behind those expectations loomed the genuine aspiration of the human being to achieve totality after numerous individual learning experiences which couldn't satisfy him. I was a witness, curious and filled with joy, to the events occurring in the people around me. One fundamental and pervasive equation of spiritual mathematics emerged, enlightening many events from my own life. By experiencing the infinite world, the seeker shapes and restricts himself by the constant need to make himself final and perfect, to find or create a condition which will present the embodiment of perfection, thus making his search complete. All those countless attempts are doomed to failure until the cognition finally dawns on him that the only possible perfection is the primeval void from which he came and to which he returns.

The great value of the Gnostic omazu formula, which I'd chosen by some fortunate coincidence, became clear. I became aware that something extraordinary was occurring,

the crown of all my pursuits and efforts. This marvellous and seductive sound, omazu, invoked from the bottomless depths the cognition of the transience and mortality of the body in the reflection of the soul's eternity. Through it, people had faced the ancient passwords of a vanished world, and were able to enter the hidden rooms which stored the magical words of beings through which, in ancient times, they gained their experiences in the quest for the eternal mysteries of existence and death. From the emptiness into which the seeker would dive and merge through the omazu sound, he would sometimes resurface with the right knowledge in his mind, like with a pearl in his hand. I was obviously on the right track, no one had directed me to it, and without anybody's help I'd managed to cut away the layers of ignorance and push through them to reach the values which completed people. Yet I suspected that my discovery was in some sort of secret collusion with my initiation into the bee nation and Great-Uncle Ivan.

The janitor of an elementary school rented me a classroom for a few weeks when there were no classes in the school and I threw myself into a series of courses which fused together in my clouded mind, so that I could hardly say what happened at which one. In the chaotic interweaving of many experiences, emotionally charged conclusions and great hopes for the future, the factors common for most participants gradually took shape. These were the void as the source of most of the ideas, insights, and unusual experiences which I could call cosmic ones and the appearance of words which had great significance for the people who generated them, although they didn't have any real objective value. It wasn't hard to guess that the words which would appear to each of them sooner or later were piore and arelena. I had to accept, although I resisted for a while, that **arelena** was the first word which

God used to create this world, and not **om** as the New Age followers, who took it from the East, believe.

Sound meditation on omazu, and then on arelena and some other Gnostic words whose structure was based on buzzing and humming sounds was my spiritual path. I became sure of that. It seemed that I'd follow it to the end of my life. Then fate, that dark-eyed lady with the enigmatic smile, focused me on the light.

9

Light! I'd been reading about it in occult literature for years and listening to many people talk about it too. The basic idea was that after the elimination of some problem you shouldn't leave an empty space in its place, because it will absorb something else, usually a similar problem. The cure for such an undesirable turn of events is to place a light into the vacuum through visualization. Light, I learned at a young age, is a universal cure. It's possible to remove many past traumas and unpleasant experiences and, when light takes their place, the entire past becomes a luminous river. That's why experts say that it's never too late to experience a happy childhood.

If you want to protect yourself from undesirable influences, I learned, you should visualize an aura of light around yourself. You should do that at least once a day and negative influences will bounce off your energy armour like a pebble thrown at a smooth concrete wall.

There were a lot of technical manuals in which light was used. For instance, when you want to end a relationship with someone, you need to imagine the wide strip of light that connects you, and then with a large knife in your hand you cut through that link in your mind. I'd done it a few times and had good results. Light is also used in the Kabbalistic Cross exercise. You visualize the light source over your head, and then pull the light strip in the shape of a cross over your body, and in that way emotional stabilization is achieved.

There was truth in most of these methods - you would feel protected within your aura as though from some sort of energy shield, and the undesirable relationship with the person in question would change.

"The source of everything, therefore of light too, is darkness," Vladimir, an acquaintance of mine, told me in a convincing voice. He'd just returned from England from meditations in a dark room. Elation following the experiences he'd had radiated from him. Viktor sent him to me. He was like the spiritual traffic police and kept directing people towards me. Vladimir couldn't wait to tell somebody about his experiences, which he claimed had changed his life.

He came to my apartment for a chat. He was a man of thirty or thirty-five years of age, of medium height with short-cut ginger hair, and a strong chest and arms. With his freckled face and thick neck he looked more like a heavyweight lifter than a spiritual seeker. His blue eyes were wide and bright; he spoke rapidly and loudly, and was extremely restless. During our conversation he kept fidgeting and leaning towards me, staring at me intently the entire time.

"Would you like some coffee?"

"Certainly not! After the dark room I quit drinking coffee and everything else except pure water. The body accepts only healthy elements. Most people do the same after this experience which has no equal on the planet."

"I've been in these waters for many years, but I've never heard of meditation in a dark room."

He suddenly threw his head back and upwards and in the same breath said: "That's the saddest of all. Yes, there are only one or two books about the dark room. I brought you the material and you'll see what goes on there. Although reading doesn't come close to describing the true

value of that experience. It's the most powerful method for the activation of the higher spheres of the brain."

He quickly pulled out a handful of printed texts from his leather bag. "You don't need anything more than this. If you're mature enough for the most profound experiences in life, you'll immediately realize the value of the dark room. You know, this has always been known, but only to a narrow circle of chosen ones. Two thousand and six hundred years ago Lao Tzu said: Mystery and imagination arise from the same source. That source is darkness ... Darkness within darkness, the door to each understanding. He knew what the highest cognition was. Here's the name and telephone number of the man you need to call."

"I'll read the materials first... that method originates from the west, doesn't it?"

"No! No one can say where and when it first appeared because it's universal, but is known only to the very few. It originates from shamanism – during initiation shamans used to be held in isolation in dark caves for days, sometimes weeks, so their eyes opened to invisible worlds. The procedure was the same for the American and Siberian shamans. Candidates were initiated into the Orphic mysteries in the temples' underground rooms, in ancient Egypt in the pyramids, again in the dark. Today, the famous master, Mantak Chia, teaches this method. In Thailand he initiated and trained Eric Buston to run this method. I advise you to go to Eric. England is closer than Thailand, and the value of the experience is the same."

I decided to carefully read all the material on the dark room because I hadn't heard anything about that area until then. I sensed that in this process there was a high possibility for delusions, hallucinations, and on the other side panic and the disintegration of the personality. The

title of Eric Buston's script, which Vladimir gave me, was *"Experience of the Dark Room: User Manual."*

At the door Vladimir squeezed my hand firmly and said enthusiastically, "As soon as you've read the material, call me. I know what you're going to say. "

I made myself some coffee, put it on the desk, opened the script and began to read carefully. In light isolation, wrote the author, the epiphysis is activated, which he equated with the third eye. Such activation leads to a state whereby the higher brain is flooded with significant neurotransmitters. Man's imagination begins to externalize so that even with his eyes open, he enters scenes from his imagination. The brain becomes aware of itself, and the entire nervous system also begins to develop an awareness of what it's doing, therefore man gains the ability to program himself. The human brain opens itself as it was opened in the mother's womb. In this state, the practitioner gains access to his meta-programs and creates new electric connections in the deepest stratums of the brain.

My curiosity skyrocketed. I was surprised; I'd assumed that this was going to be one of many wishy-washy descriptions of the methods which could be found in New Age literature and pamphlets, which are advertised as miraculous. This was something different. My focus on the text made me forget about my surroundings.

The further text referred to the Tibetan Book of the Dead. In recent months, I'd thoroughly read and studied this book, because its contents mesmerized me. Although I'm a doctor, I'd attended only one death. The phases my aunt had passed through while she was dying were literally a copy of what was described in the Tibetan Book. I had a fantasy that one day, when I was sufficiently spiritually developed, I would be able, in full consciousness, to go through the dying process and return to this body. Before I

was given this text, I'd been sure that some Lama had already done that, or a group of them, because they were able to provide so many detailed descriptions of the dying process and after death states of consciousness. Now this text offered me the information I'd been dreaming about. It was clearly written: "*For centuries the Tibetan Lamas kept the knowledge of the dark room secret, especially the technique which enables the Tibetan Book of the Dead to be literally experienced. When somatic molecules of epiphyses overwhelm the nervous system in the dark room, the Book of the Dead becomes available consciously, visually and directly*."

Eric Buston's contact number was at the beginning of the text. I got up, picked up the phone and called him.

10

I arrived in Elks Creek by taxi in the early afternoon. The reception area was spacious and bright with a dark blue carpet on the floor and white walls decorated with photos of Krishnamurti, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Mantak Chia. Plastic chairs were lined up along the walls. When I went in Eric was sitting at his desk. There was nobody in the room besides him. He stood up, approached me, shook my hand and pointed to a chair. He sat opposite me. He had small dark eyes, short hair combed forward and thin lips pressed together.

"I'm glad you came."

"I was attracted by the text you published. Vladimir gave it to me. He was here recently. When can I start?"

"Tomorrow. We usually have small groups of participants. This time you'll be alone."

"The part of the text about consciously entering bardo is fascinating. Does that always happen during a stay in the dark room?"

"No. Some people experience it, some don't. "

"Not all of them?" My enthusiasm began to dwindle.

"Everyone has fascinating experiences in one form or another. They exceed anything you can experience in other spiritual development systems in that amount of time."

"Are those experiences deeper if you stay in the room longer?"

"Certainly," he said and smiled. "Some stay only three days, some 14. The longest period is 42 days, but it takes a certain maturity for such a long period."

"I'm sure I can make it for 42 days without any problem."

He clenched his thin lips: "Many say that at the beginning, and afterwards ask to get out earlier. Those who endure have very valuable experiences. You'll see that you yourself filter what you experience. Your brain creates a hologram of reality, the outside world doesn't do it. When you come out of the dark room you'll become aware that everything you see around you was created in your head. It ceases to be a scientific theory, but becomes a personal experience."

"Are you saying that man then experiences the world in a Buddhist way, as an illusion?"

"The world is indeed real, the illusion is the way we see it. The dark room will teach you that there are different versions of what you see. You'll become aware of the multiple realities in which we live. What will occur is the accelerated integration of the separate components of your self, the integration of the chakras, meridians, and bio-energetic components of your body and emotions. Your body of energy will become the carrier, or if I may say so, the vehicle for the journey into yourself and the universal hologram."

My breath became shallow: "I'm glad I'll be starting straight away. Can I fast for a few days while I'm in the dark room?"

"It isn't good to fast during that time, because starvation makes a person vulnerable. You need a lot of food containing tryptophan, which is one of the amino acids. You'll be given brown rice, bananas, dates, milk and dairy products. You should drink plenty of water. The food

will be delivered by an assistant three times a day. She'll come once every three days to clean up the room and wash the toilet. Don't let that take you by surprise."

"How will she see in the room if there's no light at all?"

"Ah yes, many people ask that. She'll wear infrared goggles used by the army, so she'll be able to see as much as she needs to. Now have a rest after your trip, you can walk around the estate. You'll enter the room tomorrow, after breakfast.

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Before I entered the dark room my assistant, Betty, stayed in it for ten minutes, checking to ensure that not even the slightest ray of light could get in. She showed me where the toilet was and where to keep food and my clothing. She gave me a plastic container with a lid for fruit and five litres of fresh water, two food bowls and two spoons. "It would be best to take care of your needs in a crouching position like women do so as not to soil or wet yourself," she said with a hint of hesitation in her voice. "I hope you don't have any electronic devices. There's no music here. You need to focus on yourself completely. Some men don't get shaved, but if you want to do it in the dark, you can."

"Ok"

There was a small lobby in front of the dark room. A door separated it from the room where we were. She pointed to it with her hand: "I'll knock on the outer door when I bring you your food. I'll put the bowl of food on the floor. When you hear me closing the outer door, put the mask over your eyes, open the inner door and take the food from the floor. Leave the used bowl and spoon there. When I bring you food the next time, we'll repeat that process and you'll leave the used bowl and spoon on the floor. I'll take them to be washed. Do you have any questions?"

"Do I need to do any specific exercises?"

"That's up to you. Ok? I wish you a fruitful stay in the room."

She closed the inner door and then I heard her closing the outside one. I wanted to put the soft velvet mask over my eyes, but it wasn't necessary, I was in total darkness. I put my hand in front of my open eyes and moved from side to side several times. I couldn't see my fingers. By dragging my feet along the floor I slowly approached the bed and lay down. What was going to happen? What was waiting for me? Would I make it for forty-two days? At this point I felt safe. The bed was comfortable, the room temperature pleasant, I didn't mind the complete silence.

I followed my thought sequence for a while. They appeared abruptly and disappeared again just as suddenly. There was no connection between them. I soon got bored with that. I started doing my favourite pranayama by counting under my breath: I inhaled for about eight seconds, held it for thirty-two and exhaled for sixteen. The last phase, exhalation, was the hardest, because I hadn't practiced it for a long time. I tried an easier rhythm: 6-24-12. That wasn't so difficult. I paid attention to my body. I had a clear sense of its boundaries in the upper part, especially the head and arms. My legs were getting lost in the unfamiliar space, so I couldn't tell where my feet were. To do that, I pressed against the bed with my heels.

Although I wasn't hungry, I decided to eat. I reached the table by dragging my feet along the floor, took a banana out of the container, peeled it and put it in my mouth. It smelt nice and had a pleasantly mild taste. I became more aware of it than in my everyday life. I wondered whether my senses would remain so sharp for the whole time.

I couldn't work out how much time had passed. I started to do triple meditation. I was instructed in it by the leader of the Belgrade algology group, who'd tried for some time to persuade me to become a member. You're supposed to concentrate on three elements simultaneously: on

feeling I in the middle of the chest, the blue spot in the middle of your visual field and on the internal sound. If a person keeps his eyes focused on the centre of his visual field for a long time while his eyes are closed, a blue spot will appear after a while. It isn't really a spot, but a coloured stain and it's not always blue, sometimes it can be blue-red. It moves all the time in the middle of the field of vision, and the closed eye view should be kept on it. Many people aren't aware of the internal sound, although it's present all the time. It's a hissing or mild buzzing in the ears and when it becomes particularly strong people perceive it as a disorder. It has its medical term - tinnitus - but it's actually a component of our spiritual lives, which I realized by doing this meditation.

This time the blue spot appeared in a clear blue light, the colour of burned alcohol. The internal sound was the same as always, a slight hiss which had some sort of sharpness akin to a razor blade. I had difficulties keeping all three elements in my mind at the same time. Two of them were there but the third would slip away. For a while I tried by an effort of willpower to experience them simultaneously, but I failed. I got up off the bed, dragged myself to the table and sat on the only chair. The edges of the table were covered with sponge to prevent me from hurting myself while moving about in the dark. I continued to do triple meditation with more success in a sitting position. The blue spot turned into a wide field of beautiful bright blue light, which had a certain degree of stability to it. It'd shimmer in front of me for ten seconds, and then it would begin to change shape, to appear and then disappear again.

At the end of the day, in my assessment, I noticed that I'd become disoriented in the room, and well oriented within myself.

When my triple meditation exercises became tiring, I'd take a nap for a while, and then switch to Atman meditation. It's easy to do because it's meditating without an object, but it's difficult to do for longer periods of time the way it should be done. It's done by maintaining consciousness that you are conscious. Hence its name. The basic characteristic of true being or Atman is consciousness that you are conscious. I couldn't do it for more than fifteen minutes. I'd forget what I was supposed to be doing and my mind would wander. When I say fifteen minutes, that's a guess, because I didn't have a watch. The activity might've lasted fifteen minutes, maybe a whole hour. During some periods, I couldn't maintain my focus on being conscious of consciousness for more than just a few seconds. The contents in my mind would constantly transform from one to another in an endless series. There was usually no connection between one thought and the next: a car in motion, a child crying, a grass covered meadow, a ship on the high seas, pressure in my shoulder....

I quickly realized that I assimilated sounds in the darkness in a completely different way to in the light. My barriers were lost, and my reliance on stereotypes, which are usually based on the manifestation of things, events and people, were fading away and disappearing. My emotions had opened and I was connected with others from a distance in which space loses its role.

Some deep states of consciousness which I experienced in this situation gave me precognitive impressions. At some moments I felt a general connection with all living beings, and also with things and phenomena I'd once considered inanimate.

Throughout my whole period in the dark room I didn't feel any pain at any time. My usual lower back and neck pain disappeared on the very first day. I felt completely relaxed and often in a state of deep peace. My

whole body would, for some periods, lose its materiality. I experienced myself as pure energy. I began to question my previously accepted understanding of my being. From the material I'd read, I knew what changes occurred in cerebral chemistry in the dark. In a state of awakened consciousness neurotransmitters are normally synthesized in the brain by the amino acid tryptophan. In the dark this is inhibited, so melatonin is produced instead. During the further inhibition of biochemical processes melatonin is converted into rosin spirit and the epiphysis takes over control of the organism from the pituitary gland.

I started to experience lucid dreams on the second day and they went on until the end of my stay. The difference between my fantasies and dreams gradually disappeared. I started to imagine my departure from the dark room and that thought immediately turned into a dream. I had an image that I was eating meat. I remembered that this was a bad sign, so instead of meat I imagined an orange with a sweet and sour taste and it was there in my mouth.

The strangest changes I experienced were related to other beings. I thought of my son and he was in front of me in a completely clear form as I'd never been able to imagine him before. It was like watching a very realistic film about him in colour. In addition I spontaneously fused with him. When I remembered how, at the age of four, he'd fallen off the bed, I felt for a moment a clear pain in my shoulder and the back of my head. Recall his smiling face at his birthday party brought a smile to my face too.

At one point, I remembered my primary motive for being there. I wanted to try to get into bardo - Tibetan yoga's after death world, as lamas do, and to return to my body in full consciousness. It seemed that only rare gifted individuals had that experience. None other than Goethe expressed the idea that his contemporaries in Germany failed to understand: *"Until you know how to die and how*

to return to life, you're just a sad passenger on this dark Earth." How did he arrive at this knowledge? He'd probably never heard of Tibetan yoga, lamas and the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Yet he intuitively sensed this significant truth in a way peculiar to poets.

Lying on the bed I spent a long time thinking of how to do that. I couldn't find an effective method. To go in my thoughts through the top of my head and leave my body? I did that with no results – I went through very easily that way, but I found myself above my body. I saw my body on the bed in a grey light similar to moonlight, but that wasn't the entrance to bardo. My body looked insubstantial, like concentrated energy. I saw the major chakras and meridian lines; my body seemed to be wrapped in a power grid which connected the nodal bright spots. I needed to make a bit more of an effort to remain in the space outside my body, and when I stopped straining, I slipped back into it.

I began to recall people close to me who had died. I'd loved my grandfather on my father's side more than my other relatives. He died in his sleep. He was immediately in front of me, in his bed, his head resting on a large white pillow, under an oil painting of the wavy sea with white foam on the tops of the waves. His face was pale, with a half-open mouth. My grandmother was sitting next to him, weeping quietly. At this point, I was caught by the sense of his goodness. I could physically feel it like warmth spreading around my heart. That feeling mingled with the sadness emanating from my mother engulfed me.

Spontaneously, without any effort on my part, Puki appeared, my dog who'd died several years ago. He was a golden mongrel, with a kinky tail and warm sensitive eyes. I saw him lying in the big armchair, totally real and staring at me in a way which was very familiar. I'd taken his death very hard. I loved him, it seemed to me, as much as my children. Now that love erupted in me, permeating all of

the space I occupied and out of my mouth came: "Puki, you're my happiness!" My throat tightened, my whole body was quivering and there were tears in my eyes. I thought for a moment that this was an illusion, a hallucination, but that thought vanished immediately. It was my Puki, as real as real can be. I felt the heat of his body while I cuddled him on the armchair and kissed his head.

Deceased persons started to appear in my mind. Their faces would appear in front of me for a short time, and that was enough to feel the full power of the feelings that I'd once nurtured for them, and my knowledge of them was now comprehensive and complete. That knowledge had once existed in me, but I'd repressed it for reasons which now seemed ridiculous. The only thing that was worthwhile was true knowledge and that was now fully present.

The rapid rotation of the characters made it seem like they'd been placed in a kaleidoscope, which an invisible hand was turning before me. Then the realization came to me that all of the beings which were appearing to me were the creations of my own spirit, which was now the void of infinite capacity, radiant and omnipotent, made of nothingness. If I'd accepted them at the time of their formation, instead of resisting them, I would've experienced myself as an absolute void that can create whatever it wants. Now it was time to accept them no matter how unpleasant.

Suddenly, I remembered Kevin Birdsong from Eureka, California. I'd never met him, but we exchanged letters for a few years which were of great value to me. He used to give me brief advice about things that weren't clear to me which eventually proved to be correct. I remembered how he described epiphysis breathing. The pineal gland, he wrote, dominates the entire endocrine system and our psychic life. In order to master it you need to revive the function of the pineal gland, because it's only active during

childhood and soon after becomes calcified thus losing its previous capabilities. He described to me the breathing which he called epiphyseal and advised me to practice it regularly which, of course, I didn't. I did it from time to time but there were no significant results. Now I started to do it. I imagined an endless field of white light around me. When I inhaled, I created a vision of a field of white light suddenly gathering in the centre of my head, where the pineal gland was supposed to be. While exhaling I imagined the endless field of white light spreading outwards from the pineal gland. On this occasion I had no difficulties, the visualization was sharper than it'd ever been in the past and it occurred effortlessly, I was more of an observer than a practitioner.

Then a blue light appeared in the distance, so bright that I found it hard to look at it while it was approaching me. I was fascinated by it, and I seemed to be opening my eyes wide even though I was in the dark. At the same time a dim white light formed beside it which I could look at without any difficulty or resistance. I soon realized that the blue light was associated with my past identity when I was wise. However, linked with it, came fear which turned onto horror. It was caused by what I'd experienced in the past when I left the identity of wisdom. I turned my gaze away from it to the blurry white light and then I remembered that I had to face the blinding blue light, no matter how much resistance I felt towards it.

I failed. I remained in the dim white light where the feeling of safety and protection prevailed.

I don't know how long I was in it. An hour or a few days. It's impossible to say. Then a clear white light started to appear. It radiated a dazzling brilliance making it hard to look at. I knew immediately that this was the identity I had when I felt happy, with the ability to create life forms. It hit me with immense power. A grey-black light appeared

alongside it. I was afraid of the dazzling white light and wanted to enter the grey-black light. With part of my consciousness I knew I had to confront the white light and merge with it, but I withdrew.

A field of yellow light slowly began to dawn. Its brilliance was becoming stronger, blinding, so I didn't have the strength to look at it. It was hitting me in stronger waves. It was somehow connected with my egoism. It was no good closing my eyes and bending my head, it was in me. Gradually, alongside it, a dark green light with nothing threatening in it started to emerge. I should've faced the terrifying yellow light and avoided the dark green light, but I failed yet again.

A red light appeared in front of me. It was a symbol of the identity I took on when I was able to notice the difference between things and phenomena. It was clean and bright. It hit me with a huge power I was in no condition to cope with. I was overtaken with the desire to possess physical things and, at the same time, the fear that I wouldn't succeed. I noticed that a dim red light had appeared along with the bright red light, and I made my way towards it.

I became totally disoriented by the oscillation of colours and the sudden fears that were assailing me.

Out of nowhere a green light started to form in front of me. It embodied the identity I was filled with when I was capable of doing good deeds. It was shining brighter and brighter, light green, and it was terrifying because it hit me and infused me with great power which I could neither resist nor cope with. At the same time a dark green light emerged which was, I knew, a symbol of jealousy. It didn't cause fear in me, or the inability to confront it. I deferred to it.

Various identities that I knew I'd had in the past began to appear: warrior, school teacher, nurse, priest, thief, murderer, father, son, mother, daughter. They appeared in a constant succession of changeable guises, genders and races. Although they were all associated with me, I was aware that they weren't me, but that I'd used them to gain experience. They appeared in the forms they'd had when I demonstrated certain personality traits. They created confusion in my mind. I wished I was stupid, instead of being a person full of knowledge, because it seemed like a path with fewer responsibilities.

Some of these experiences were repellent, dare I say eerie. I had the strong desire to kill and destroy, rather than understand, and that was followed by images in which I was doing that. There was some order to the sequence of those experiences, they occurred intermittently in contradictions. I'd kill someone, and then immediately afterwards I'd experience being killed. Strangely, there was more suffering in the scenes when I was the perpetrator than when I was the victim. At one point I sank into the darkness, like into a bottomless pool of water.

I stood bent over the thorny bushes watching the huts made of wicker and straw next to a small stream which was meandering through the deep grass, so that its waters could only be seen in places where the grass was shorter and sparse. Smoke was rising from the huts. Several women were crushing seeds in a wooden mortar. I was tense because I'd never been so far outside my village, from

which I was now banished. I gave up the idea of approaching them. I couldn't expect anything but danger from these people. A woman with a wicker basket headed towards me and I quickly crawled backwards. When I'd distanced myself from her, I got up and ran along the stream between the trees. I calmed down, and the tension that had followed me for days vanished.

Above my head, I heard birds chirping in the branches and the quiet gurgling of the stream. The stream was wider in this spot and the water was slightly deeper. Watching its transparent water made me feel thirsty. I leaned over the water and saw my face. It was the well-known face of a man, dressed in leather, with a fur cap on his head. I had prominent cheekbones and strong arched eyebrows, my beard and moustache were thin, and my eyes red and bleary, as though from an inflammation or because of the dust. Although I'd seen myself several times before in the calm surface of the water, I was now looking at my face with curiosity. I looked exhausted, I'd been abandoned like a hunted animal, and there was nobody to help me.

When I was banished from the tribe I'd moved around close to our cave for several days. Hidden in a thicket I'd watched the people and children I knew, longing to return and be with them. This desire grew with the fall of darkness and the cold which descended with the fog. Intense hunger tortured me. I ate the berries I managed to find, and I quenched my thirst in the stream our people never came to. I knew they'd kill me if I broke the ostracism rule and the fear of their catching me plagued me the whole time.

I wandered far from our cave in search of food. It was a hilly terrain where I came across deer several times, but with a stick as my only weapon, I couldn't get close enough to them. It wasn't until the third day of wandering that I managed to kill a skinny ratite. I was so hungry that I ate

half of it raw, and then I baked the rest on a small fire. Its flesh fed me for a few days. I was afraid of large animals, but I didn't dare build a fire at night in fear of the hunters finding me.

I saw a young woman with very long hair tied back with a leather strap heading towards the stream I was drinking from. She was carrying a skin she was planning to fill with water. I took a few steps back and hid beneath the branches of the conifers. The woman came to the water and immersed the skin in the stream to fill it. She looked around as though she were afraid someone would grab her from behind. I knew she could smell my scent, because I could smell hers. As she bent over the water, I could see her thighs with very little of the down our women's legs were covered with. My heart was beating fast and strong, my nostrils flared, and I felt heat in my stomach.

The woman had almost filled the skin. I threw aside the conifer branches which were covering me and rushed toward her. When I was right behind her, she turned and opened her mouth as if to scream, but she didn't make a sound. I hit her on the head with the stick. I took her as if she were my wife. I lay next to her on the bank of the stream. Blood was flowing from the wound on her head through her long hair. There was blood was on my face too from rubbing against her. My solitude came to a brief end. I felt the veins in my neck pulsating and serenity in my body. I knew I'd done a bad thing, but I didn't have a guilty conscience because of it. People had been unjust to me. They'd banished me from the tribe and made me feel like a hunted beast.

I heard the distant voices of several men and women who were looking for the woman I'd knocked out and taken by force. I was engulfed by fear again. I knew they'd kill me if they caught me. The voices of these people were desperate, as though they knew something terrible had

happened to the woman. I saw her bleeding head next to my knees, and for the first time I was struck by the painful question that emerged in my mind - why did I do that?

I didn't suffer for long because the people who were looking for the woman spotted me. I started running through the woods, the branches whipping me in the face and body, and blood dripping over my forehead and eyes. Strong hands grabbed me, I heard loud shouts in a language I didn't understand, and then I felt a sharp pain in my head and back.

My rough figure dressed in leather and the people gathered around me shouting angrily slowly moved away and sank into darkness, and the scene turned into a dark basement or dungeon with damp walls. My body had transformed. Now I was a nine or ten year old boy, left in a dark room to cry out for his mother loudly and desperately: Mommy, mommy, don't leave me! Don't leave me, Mommyyyy! My voice was weaker and weaker, I tired myself out and finally the only sound coming from me was the quiet whining of an abandoned puppy. I knew my mother had left me there, because she had to do it at that moment and I tried to understand that, but instead of understanding, a feeling of hopeless abandonment and terror flowed through me.

The darkness began to fade, at first gradually like when the sun breaks through thick clouds, and then everything around me was blinding white. I was trudging through deep snow, feeling its chill. I was surrounded by

frozen, exhausted people. We were making our way through snowdrifts, frightened and desperate. At that moment I knew everything. We were all that was left of our tribe which had been attacked by bloodthirsty neighbours, who were chasing us down like animals, killing and eating us. I was worn-out, walking behind my fellow tribesmen who were breaking through the deep snow, running out of energy with each step. I thought of cutting my veins and dying before they caught me, to avoid the torture and slaughter that they ritually performed. I fell in the snow unable to move and slowly lost consciousness.

The images were still merging. At one moment I felt like lying down on the simple, hard bed, unable to move or talk. Around me, sitting in a semicircle, were people with slanted eyes, dressed in thin orange cotton robes looking intently at me. Even though my mind was obscured to external impressions, the situation was completely clear to me. I found myself in the body of an old man on his deathbed. I was the head of a group of people in a monastery. For many years I'd taught them as best as I could about the universe and the human soul - that everything in this world exists through opposite polarities. Nothing exists without its opposite or complement and the basic game of life is to integrate them into ourselves and thus achieve oneness. I was slightly disappointed because I felt that my students believed that, at the hour of my death, they'd get from me what they'd all been hoping for all those years - the golden key to all their problems, which would

replace the fight for the integration of polarity through long daily meditations. They had different personality traits, but they were all united in that hope.

Next to my deathbed knelt my successor with a shaved head and wrinkled face. He was the eldest of the students, just a bit younger than me and, at that moment, he had mixed feelings which I recognized in their entirety: pride that he'd succeed me as head of the monastery and the next teacher, anxiety over the loss of the safe support he'd had in me and uncertainty as to how he'd behave when he sat in my chair. Next to him was sitting the next priest according to age, for whom I felt the deepest sympathy. He felt true sorrow at my dying and a feeling of injustice that he wouldn't be replacing me, but a man who knew less than him, and whose only advantage was that he was a few years older. The other followers sat after him in the semicircle, in order of age, to the youngest student who'd come to the monastery three days ago, when it was already known that I was dying so he'd had no chance to talk to me. Now, for the first time he was sitting near me, hoping, like the others, that he'd be given the magic formula for happiness from a dying teacher.

In my already darkened consciousness floated the question of how to direct them with my last message onto the real road of the integration of opposites which is the key to the exit from the dungeon of this universe, rather than the false hope of obtaining a simple formula for salvation. At the same time serenity hovered in me, because that was the game of life I'd also played for many years.

My successor got up from his knees, leaned over my bed and whispered close to my ear: "Master, what is your final message to your pupils. What should I tell them?"

I was already quite weak. I spoke, and my voice had never been so faint: "Tell them that the truth is like a river."

He shook his head with his eyes closed tightly as he heard the great truth from me which was completely clear to him. My thoughts penetrated to the bottom of his soul and I knew he had doubts about what my words meant. However, he turned to his neighbour and, emphasizing each word, said to him: "The master's last message was that the truth is like a river."

He repeated the whole procedure. He nodded as he heard the deep truth which he fully understood, and conveyed it to the person next to him. In that way my words travelled from mouth to ear all the way to the last one in the row, the young novice who'd come to the monastery three days ago. I could feel how spontaneous and natural he was, devoid of any desire to pretend like his predecessors. He jerked his head back, an expression of doubt on his face and he asked the person next to him loudly: "What do the master's words mean - the truth is like a river? What does he mean by that?"

He hesitated for a few seconds. What should he say? It wasn't clear to him what these words meant, or to his colleagues either, although they sounded profound. He took the safe option and turned to his neighbour with the same words: "What do the master's words mean - the truth is like a river? What does he mean by that?"

His neighbour also hesitated for a few moments, because he didn't know what to say either. He turned to his predecessor, and repeated the question. This question went in reverse order all the way back to my future successor. He had the strongest doubt. Having hesitated for a while, he leaned over my bed and asked me quietly: "Master, what do your words mean, the truth is like a river. What should I tell them?"

I gave my last instruction barely moving my lips, because my strength had completely abandoned me, "Tell

them - the truth is not like a river." I was filled with immense pleasure as I rose above my body and set off towards the light. Those two affirmations merged into one within me and I hoped the same would happen at least to some of them.

I suddenly found myself in a luminous body, which had the appearance of my physical body with the ability to move at will. It was the result of my curiosity. I observed other beings in their luminous bodies. They saw me, but didn't express any desire to make contact. Now, a vision of my possible birth place started to appear. Then I was startled by the sound of movement right next to me, and was immediately transferred to another reality. I woke up on the bed in the dark room. Next to me Betty was moving around wearing her infrared goggles. She cleaned the room once every three days, wiping the floor and picking up pieces of food which were scattered around. I could see her body of energy like a strong illuminated shadow whether my eyes were open or closed.

"How are you? How're you coping with the loneliness?" Her voice was friendly with a nuance of concern.

"I don't know what to tell you. It's a terrible, incomprehensible, and miraculous world." I was aware of myself in her presence, but with one part of my consciousness I was in a world of light.

"Well you've coped well. You're getting out tomorrow."

"Why? I've never felt better."

"Your time is up. Tomorrow you'll have been in the room for forty two days."

"Good lord! I don't believe it!"

"That's a characteristic feeling of those who endure forty-two days. The dark room is like a drug. Those who last so long want to extend their stay indefinitely."

"Tell Eric that I want to stay in the room for a while longer. I'll pay him the difference."

"It's not about the money. After you, as soon as I clean up the room, four people from the Netherlands are coming in. They're waiting for you to leave."

When Betty closed the door behind her, the sequence of my experiences with identities was interrupted. Even though I was still in the dark, I became more aware of myself: the position of my body, my thoughts and feelings. Like a curtain had suddenly fallen over the enchanting worlds which had been open to me. I wondered if I'd manage to remember my experiences or whether they'd fade away like a dream which is vivid immediately after waking up, and then evaporates during the day. Some of these experiences were dreadful, but now even those seemed valuable. I'd never experienced anything like that in any of the famous spiritual development methods. I could only read about others' experiences of this kind.

12

For a few days after arriving home, I was completely unfit for everyday activities. I couldn't read the newspaper, or talk on the phone. My phone was disconnected; I'd turn it on only to share a few words with my family. They knew that I'd been abroad regarding "those things" and they started to worry about my mental stability.

I was haunted by the images I'd seen and the feelings I'd experienced during my stay in the dark room, especially once I'd started practising epiphysis breathing. What did they mean? They were filled very strong energy; there was no doubt about that. Were they just the consequence of epiphysis breathing, or would they have occurred anyway because of the prolonged stay in the dark? I hadn't achieved my main goal. I admitted to myself that I hadn't managed to penetrate bardo and to awaken experiences between two lives that the Tibetan lamas experienced consciously. Strangely, this admission didn't create dissatisfaction in me. My thoughts had stopped there. Something was missing in the previous thought. The thought that I hadn't manage to enter bardo was not true. The experiences of coloured lights which had lined up in front of me and the emotions that accompanied them were identical to the descriptions from the Tibetan Book of the Dead. I'd experienced them in the same sequence in which they were described in the book. That was a bit of a shock, - hey, I did enter bardo then after all!

I didn't have the deep and glorious knowledge which would make me a wise man, as I'd secretly hoped, but that was without doubt a bardo experience. Bardo is obviously a postmortal world, a parallel and complementary reality to this earthly world. I got up from the bed where I was lying and began to walk restlessly from wall to wall. I took the Tibetan Book of the Dead from the shelf, and browsed through it. That was it! Even the bodily conditions which I'd experienced prior to my experience with the colours coincided completely. I remembered that the last trace of body heat had remained in the tip of my nose and that people have a saying for someone who is in a state of exhaustion that his soul is in his nose. If Betty hadn't broken and cut short my stay would I have had the experiences which should follow as described in the book, about entering the couple of future parents in copulation?

My thoughts remained focused on the recognition that I hadn't succeeded in following the instructions from the Tibetan Book to avoid the dim lights and follow the dazzling lights which carried fear and horror within. While reading the Tibetan Book in previous years, I was convinced that I could do that. Now I was facing my weaknesses. The word weakness was insufficient, because my weakness contained a tremendous helplessness which I hadn't been able to overcome. After this experience would I be able to do it when I left my mortal body permanently? I admitted to myself that I didn't possess the necessary strength to confront my fears with the knowledge that I was given this life just to gain those same abilities. Without them, I was a little piece of fluff in a gust of wind deprived of my own will.

Besides the fundamental disappointment with my own weaknesses some valuable changes were apparent. My observations were sharpened. For the first time in my life I really saw nature, trees, clouds, grass. Everything I noticed

vibrated with life; it was of an unearthly beauty which I hadn't been aware of previously, it radiated energy and whispered the truth about itself. I alternated between feeling microscopically small and infinitely large. I had the impression that my heart had become much larger physically and it was exerting pressure on my rib cage preventing it from expanding. I radiated waves of love and that made me happy in a way I hadn't felt before. About a month after leaving the room almost all my dreams were lucid, memories at a cellular level emerged and awareness of other dimensions, along with the spontaneous cure of some of my physical aches and pains. What seemed the most valuable were astral projections to distant areas of the Earth and beyond, to strange planets in the galaxy which are different from our world, even though those impressions were blurred.

I decided to collect my impressions for two or three months and then go and spend another forty-two days in the dark room. I decided to fully confront the fears that were waiting for me in bardo and thus prepare myself to encounter them after the death of my physical body. That'd be an even higher and more valuable level of experience. I knew that darkness was the source of everything that exists. Just as this world emerges from absolute darkness and blossoms into countless visible galaxies, the deepest source of all that is human is the darkness of the unconscious. I was ready to channel my energy to penetrating that source as deeply as possible and hence solve all my problems and achieve all my goals.

Then I received a letter from Kevin Birdsong from El Cajon, California, with whom I'd corresponded for years. Fate had placed a large stone on the sharply-cut path that led to the dark room. The wheels of my wagon ran over it and were thrown in another direction. The idea of contact with parallel worlds had been part of my plans for a long

time, but I'd put them aside a few years ago. What had faded and been ignored now burst forth in new vibrant colours attracting me like a trumpet call.

"Let me remind you of my long-standing idea of traveling through time to parallel worlds. No matter how unlikely that may have seemed several years ago, according to many scientists who study quantum physics, it is now entirely feasible. Although for most of them it's purely theoretical, for me it's practically feasible. I can't go into details, but if your heart is still calling you in that direction, I invite you to join me. You won't mind, but I send such an invitation once only. Don't ask me for details; don't ask for guarantees, because there aren't any. Simply decide what you want, and act on it. Before you come here you should read "The Incunabula Papers" prepared and published by Emory Cranston."

Since the early days of my interest in other worlds, I'd been attracted by the popular interpretations of quantum physics, traveling through time and the existence of parallel universes. I wrote to every address I could find, but I was mostly disappointed. I was mainly given incomprehensible theories and strange explanations that are common among alternatives.

I exchanged a few letters with Jack Butler from London who was selling a hyper-dimensional resonator, his electronic device for time travel. The device came with a short brochure with explanations which he claimed sufficient to go beyond the limits of time. I thought long and hard before buying this apparatus and when I got it for three hundred and sixty dollars, the only thing I experienced was disappointment. The device consisted of a cloth cap which is used in electroencephalography, with several electrodes on which gel is placed so that it sticks better to the skull. I followed all the instructions to the letter, but the only result was an unpleasant buzzing in my

head. In an interview in "Advance Magazine", which prompted me to spend three hundred and sixty dollars, Butler claimed that one of the people who worked with his device had managed to activate it above the energy point in the Earth's network near the Great Lakes in the United States. This enabled him to physically go to the year 1945. He stayed there for about six hours. In his second attempt, he travelled to the year 1885 and stayed there for about two hours.

His interview was obviously an advertisement for the hyper-dimensional resonator. There was a small chance that this device didn't work on me only, but worked on other people. A friend of mine who begged me for a long time to give him a try, told me that he thought he saw some images. Of course, when there's a strong buzzing in your head and you expect visions from the past or future to appear, you may get blurred visions, but that isn't time travel.

Another researcher from Canada, with whom I also corresponded, informed me that Butler had been cured of schizophrenia. He was probably right. Later, I received offers from another two people to buy their devices, but this time I was smarter. I asked both of them the same question: Does your device enable you to see the results of future football games and lottery numbers? One didn't reply, and the other sent the disappointed answer that, instead of genuine scientific zeal, I had vulgar ideas about time travel.

I had the greatest confidence in Lawrence Gaglewood, with whom I corresponded for a long time. He'd been unsuccessfully trying for years to achieve time travel, and when he succeeded, he wrote me this warning: *"My research was very unpleasant. I can tell you that without any exaggeration. Some time ago I opened a passage in my aura and a very destructive energy burst into it, so I*

had a lot of serious problems. My health was endangered, I felt my nervous system was falling apart and I was going crazy. It took me a long time to close that passage, and to get the process under control."

I read the letter from Kevin Birdsong several times. My enthusiasm, which in my youth had often led me towards futile goals, ignited again, so the deadlock into which I'd fallen earlier now seemed unimportant. I couldn't wait to get the Incunabula Papers in the regular way. I phoned my childhood friend, who has been living in the United States for ten years and asked him to send me them by express mail.

I didn't fear the unpleasant experiences that could occur during such experiments and rejected the chances of remaining empty handed. Many people pointed out such dangers. Emory Coltron, with whom I was in contact, wrote about that but I read the Incunabula Papers about penetration into parallel worlds, *"Some dangers do exist, because all the data does not lead to the same goal. Some tracks do not lead to alternative worlds, but to the Minotaur, the monster which devours people in the labyrinth."*

While I was waiting for the "Incunabula" I felt as though I was sitting on a hedgehog's back. All of the materials about time in quantum physics as well as the books and articles about time travel that I'd read before, I read again with great enthusiasm. It fascinates me that the books I read again after many years remain the same, but we don't. When I got the Incunabula Papers I opened the package with trembling fingers like opening a treasure chest. Coltron originally wanted to publish a catalogue with all the existing alternative surveys which had flooded America in the last thirty years: the works of Wilhelm Reich, Nikola Tesla, whom the Americans discovered many years after his death, the major conspiracy theories, shamanism, Indonesian mysticism and brief records about

a commune in Ong's Hat. Then he narrowed his selection down to the Ong's Hat commune and several records associated with it. Amazing stories were spreading around about this commune, but they only became significant to Coltron when the community suddenly disappeared.

His catalogue fell into the hands of some of the members of the Ong's Hat commune who contacted him, and he became one of their members. By following the hints from his catalogue another fifteen people managed to enter this commune of time travellers, or, as they call themselves, chrononauts. He wrote about that in a new, revised edition of Incunabula: *"We now know each other and follow the activities of a dozen people directed to the source. When they reach a certain level we'll provide them with help, because it's possible to make a mistake in the search and get into a dangerous impasse."*

My attention was drawn to an unpublished manuscript "Alternative Dimensions" by Nick Allport, a physicist whose works were on the boundary between quantum physics and alternative theory. No publisher would agree to publish this book, which was odd, because the text is extremely interesting and would have attracted a large circle of readers. Coltron somehow managed to get a copy of this manuscript and published a few copies of it. I was mostly attracted by Allport's claim from the preface of Alternative Dimensions that he'd previously made contact with a group of time travellers, whose secret headquarters were in California. There Alport was subjected to specific training of Sufistic orientation and then made several trips to parallel universes, usually in the universe which they called the Other World.

In his manuscript Allport dealt with all the areas which are important for inter-dimensional travel: Hugh Everett's Many Worlds Theory, Sheldon's Morphogenetic Fields Theory, fractal geometry, the methods applied by

shamans and visualization techniques used for transition into parallel worlds. In the preface to his manuscript, he wrote that he'd provide the trans-dimensional express scheme later in the text, but sadly for his readers, he didn't. About a year ago Allport disappeared. The rumours were that he was killed, but most researchers in this field think that he moved over to the closest parallel universe permanently, the Other World.

Coltron, Birdsong and several other researchers of parallel worlds cite the "egg" as the main means for inter-dimensional travel. It's a chamber that resembles John Lilly's device for sensory isolation. Electrodes are placed on the traveller to collect information on his mental state, and there's a small computer screen in front of him on which he can see them and adjust his behaviour. The device was gradually improved, so at the end the fourth generation egg was used, which was far better than the previous three. By using the egg researchers managed to descend to the depths of their own beings to the cellular level, where they experienced numerous mystical experiences. They also managed to open passages, which they called the "doors" to alternative dimensions.

Birdsong sent me a copy of the letter Nick Allport sent him in response to his request for details about the egg.

Dear Kevin,

I've been thinking for a long time about constructing a tantric egg for traveling to other universes. In contrast to quantum tantra in which we try to connect ourselves with things and beings from this world, by using eggs we want to be released from this world and sail freely.

It seems to me that it'd be useful to collect the fantasies which people use to lull themselves to sleep at night. My coach often imagines himself in ancient Rome

and tries to feel that reality as tangibly as he can with as many details as possible. I don't usually have trouble falling asleep, but sometimes I use meditation that is linked with egg research. It goes like this: What you want to do in dimensional travel is to break contact with this world so that the egg levitates in a magnetic field which is generated as the best possible vacuum that can be achieved on Earth. It's also protected from electro-magnetic radiation. Gravity penetrates that field, but it doesn't present a problem because the gravitational field spreads equally and doesn't have any effect on the events. However, even though you've broken contact with the Earth, you're still phasally connected with all the things you touched in the past (Bell's Theorem). However, those phasal connections are so random that they can be ignored. In relation to those objects, the egg and its contents are in a state which is technically called the "product state", i.e. there is no connection.

In that way you're quantumly disconnected, but you can still be in connection in the classical way, i.e. the inside of the egg can be causatively dependant on what happens outside it. That's why you carry with you some resources that you can use in deciding on the position of objects, the rotational position of the egg and similar things.

Now when the egg is isolated from the other parts of the universe, it becomes subject to the Schrödinger equation - the egg is a kind of Schrödinger's cat. Therefore, the egg can now move along all the possible paths which are spreading to all the alternative universes and you don't have to do anything. Many of those universes are similar to the First World, but the longer you wait to disembark from the egg, the stranger the worlds you explore will be. Waiting increases the strangeness.

Recipe for dimensional travel: Isolate egg, connect with other realities and open the door.

You might want to call the world you're going to the Other World. It's up to you.

Although I didn't understand the part of the letter about Schrödinger's cat, it had more influence on me than all the other Incunabula Papers. Three days later I was on a plane to Frankfurt, where I had a direct flight to Los Angeles.

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Birdsong was a retired U.S. Navy officer. It was hard to imagine him in active service because he had a mild, pleasant voice and soft hands and body movements, though he was big and slightly overweight. The parting in his thin grey hair was so straight it must have been made with a ruler. The skin on his face and body had a dark bronze colour from lots of time spent outside. He lived alone on the outskirts of El Cajon, a small town approximately 20 miles from San Diego. His house was built in Mexican style, with a red tiled roof and a wide porch on thick brick columns. He'd often sit there in his rocking chair in the evenings. He didn't really do anything visible. He'd just sit there relaxing as if he was dreaming, his eyes straying over the sandy soil and the large cactuses with their broad leaves growing from it.

He met me at Los Angeles Airport. As we drove to his home I glanced at him sideways a few times and was convinced, like many times before, that the way people look doesn't match my expectations. He looked like a friendly shop assistant in a supermarket who is about to retire. The house looked like him; it fit him like a shell fits a snail. Everything in it was big, but it had some softness, like his voice. I wondered how the ideas of parallel worlds manifested in his mind, because you couldn't anticipate that on his face.

"You shouldn't really tell anyone about our stuff, Filip. Since my wife Dudi died twenty years ago, I only have three close friends. They know nothing about my deepest interests. They think that I spend my retirement days

remembering Dudi and reading detective novels. If I were to tell them something about parallel worlds, I believe that they'd get scared and start avoiding me. You're probably in a similar situation?"

"To some extent," I said, thinking of the first of many questions I wanted to ask him. "What interests me most is whether we can be sure that we're not deceiving ourselves. Are experiences of parallel worlds real?"

"I'll tell you honestly - you can't be sure. They might just be hallucinations or delusions. But, what can you be sure of? You wrote to me that in the dark room you had experiences of past lives and entering bardo... Are you sure that those were objectively verifiable experiences, rather than sensory illusions?"

"They were very real."

"Your feeling that there were real leads you to accept that they are true. Something similar is going on here. A significant number of people with whom I'm in contact describe the experiences of parallel worlds with lots of similarities. At one moment the number of subjective experiences turns into objectively valuable evidence. Transition to the Other World is now possible not only for a traveller, but he can take an untrained child and inanimate objects with him. At first people would find themselves in the Other World as naked as on the day they were born, even the clothes they were wearing didn't travel. Now travellers take books and even computers, coffee and more things they're used to here."

One question had been on the tip of my tongue since I set off on this trip: "Have you travelled, Kevin?"

"Yes," he replied simply. "Would I have asked you to come here otherwise? Just to retell others' experiences?"

"I want to go as soon as possible."

He laughed so that his big body shook. "It doesn't go so smoothly. Some people have a lot of problems."

"The problems won't stop me."

He rocked in his brown, wooden chair. He put his fingers on his chest, nodded and said with understanding: "These aren't the problems you're counting on. Some people carry a heavy burden on their backs which prevents them from entering the parallel universe no matter how much effort they make. Others may do it as easily as they fall asleep at night and they do that more than once. They circulate there and back several times. If you belong to that group of people, it'll be all right."

He was silent for a while, his eyelids flickering as he collected his thoughts, and then he went on slowly: "You know, the colonization of new universes is not a remedy for all the ailments of our reality. We bring our own problems to each new world like a hunchback his humps. Whenever people come to a new area they exterminate the natives and impose their order as the only valid one. This time, I hope things will evolve differently, because the journey to other worlds can be achieved only with a simultaneous journey within the self, and such a journey can be accomplished only through consciousness which places itself under control and rids itself of basic selfishness. This doesn't mean that we consider ourselves saints. The most important thing is that we have integrated the duality of good and evil in ourselves, which is the fundamental duality of the whole human race."

It was getting dark, I was sleepy and that gave his words depth and greater importance. The call of a coyote could be heard in the distance. There were a few houses several hundred meters around his, and coyotes come to eat food from the bins. I noticed that he had a tattoo of a lion's head on his right forearm with a date inscribed in

small letters below it. We could hear the monotonous sound of crickets and fireflies had lit up their emerald lights in the darkness around us. My desire to set off as soon as possible to parallel worlds had eased off, overcome by the serenity of the atmosphere and fatigue. I could see why he enjoyed spending his old age alone in this house.

He continued: "It's not known whether different groups of passengers enter the same world and whether there's any order to the worlds through which they pass. Most people are in the Other World, according to some claims, around a thousand. Some children have already been born there. However, the most exciting meeting I've had was with the citizens of the world which some travellers call Java 2. They claim to be a parallel evolutionary branch of Homo sapiens. They discovered the possibilities of three-dimensional travel a long time ago. The claim that there's a magical universe that can be accessed only by those who have the appropriate training originates from them...Do you follow me? They believe there are an infinite number of parallel worlds, many of which they've researched... But, I'm talking too much. You're tired after your journey."

The calm rural atmosphere overtook my body and awakened my curiosity, so I was sure I'd turnover thoughts and images of parallel worlds in my mind until dawn. Would I be able to enter those worlds or would the hump of my self-centredness and selfishness prevent me? I regretted not having devoted more time to eliminating my selfish characteristics in recent years. Now it was too late for regrets.

"As an introduction to the traveling technique you should learn the so-called space crackdown", Kevin told me

the following afternoon. Well rested and showered I'd recovered from my long journey and was ready to start. We were sitting in his sparsely furnished dining room. The floor was made of soft wood painted dark brown. Next to the window was his oak desk with multiple drawers and thick legs. There was an old typewriter on it. There were several oil paintings on the walls and it was obvious from them that his knowledge of art was modest. A sailing boat in the blue ocean waters, a boy watching goldfish in an aquarium with tears in his eyes, a Spanish dancer with red lips and long black hair, her dress floating around her legs. I'd seen such paintings on the walls of cheap hotels. It didn't bother me.

"I saw from your letters that you aren't a beginner so you won't have any problems understanding what I'm going to tell you. The world is illusory and that makes the replacement of one illusion with another easier. It's essential that you dis-identify yourself from most things which bind you to this world. Then the tendency to go to another one appears automatically. You see, ice seems immobile and firmly attached to its base. When you add thermal energy to it, it melts, becomes water and has a tendency to move around the surface if it isn't completely flat. If you add more heat to it, it turns into steam, which moves upwards. A long time ago Dante Alighieri pointed out that man's main mistake is his attachment to the things, phenomena and relations he is used to. He said, the heavens call you and circle around you, showing you their eternal glow, and your eyes are just glued to the Earth."

I took a few sips of water, put the glass down on the table and waited for what was to follow.

"It's all in our heads, or better said in our consciousness. You're connected to this illusory world by multiple links. One of them is the past, i.e. the series of memories which you keep in it, but they are unreal, they don't exist,

do they? There's only the eternal now. Do you follow me? One of the paradoxes of human nature is that negative experiences also have value for humans. People often recount the unpleasant experiences which have happened to them. Also, they often think and talk about their fears about the future and their future plans. Their energy is tied to all those spots. Lots of studies point out man's mistaken determination, but that isn't of any great help. Among others, Christ says: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. In other words, you'll be where you invested your attention and energy."

He was silent for a while, and then said, articulating each word: "Therefore, it is necessary to separate yourself from all the events from the past to which your attention is tied."

"The past doesn't affect me anymore."

"You're wrong! You'll see that soon in the crackdown of time. Let's have some coffee, and we'll start."

Kevin had the ability to explain things concisely: "With your eyes closed, take any experience from the past, pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Note the elements you see and feel in it. Then open your eyes and compare the elements from past events with those from the present time around you. Go back again in your mind to the last event, note its elements, then open your eyes again and compare them with those you have in the present moment. Follow me? While you repeat the process the elements from the past will lose their clarity and gradually disappear. Carry on until all the elements of past events disappear. When you're done with one event, select the next and continue to do the same. Just let me warn you, when you've repeated that fifty or a hundred times, you might have strange impressions and panic attacks. Now try to do that."

He left me to do the process. He pointed to a large wall clock and said: "You should do it for at least an hour. Don't give up."

The exercise was interesting at times, but mainly boring. The elements of the past disappeared rapidly. When, at the end of the process, I'd go back to the past event, although I knew that it'd happened, it was empty, there were no pictures or emotion, nothing, just emptiness. The hour seemed to drag on. I was expecting unusual phenomena or panic attacks, but there was nothing but mild boredom. I was pleased when the time was up. I wondered how many days I'd do this exercise, because I could remember a huge number of events.

Kevin was sitting in his armchair on the porch. The sun had sunk behind the western horizon, nature had become still. No birds, coyotes, or crickets could be heard. That was the atmosphere where it was possible to live completely relaxed and satisfied. Why did he need to go to other worlds? It'd be hard to find anything better. As if he'd been reading my mind he spoke:

"Life is an immense sea of games. Atman, or our true being, has the need to find all the new games in the hope of finding the final game which ends everything. People strive for happiness, believing that they will calm down when they find it, but...", he smiled like someone who knew that well, "when it lasts for a long time happiness becomes boring and then man strives to experience drama, no matter how painful that is for his ego. How did the exercise go?"

"Mostly boring."

"It's like that at the beginning. Later it'll become interesting."

"I hope I won't bombard you with questions... I'm interested in this. What happens to our illnesses, physical defects and undesirable states in the Other World?"

"You take everything you have with you, both good and evil. Since people are in an elevated emotional state when they make the journey, for some time they have the impression that they have got rid of many problems. But...but...they come back after a while."

"Is the information from the Incunabula accurate? Coltron writes that a group of travellers from Indonesia led by Subuh Surdjanto went through several parallel worlds, which they called Java 2, Java 3, until Java 7. Is that true, or are those their illusions and delusions?"

"Illusions they certainly are because, as I told you, the universe is illusory. The famous writer Vladimir Nabokov wrote that there is a strange word, which doesn't mean anything without quotation marks - that word is "reality". After a while, filled with such activities, we wonder whether our reality is made of dreams, or our dreams made of reality. Whether those are delusions, I don't know. I haven't found anything similar in their descriptions."

"Alan Jackson writes that he most often went to Java 2. His story smacks of science fiction. It's a special world there with a unique kind of flora and fauna, and the remains of cities from earlier civilizations. He claims that he was in contact with the inhabitants of Java 2, and that he was fascinated by their non-hierarchical society and their music."

Kevin shrugged. "Any such statement should be taken with a pinch of salt, but we shouldn't dismiss something just because it's contrary to our vision of reality. See this stone?" He pointed at a small wooden shelf above the front door. There was an oblong stone the size of a goose egg on it. I'd seen it when I first walked into his house, but hadn't paid much attention to it. It was quite inconspicuous, yellowish-grey, similar to many you might find in the sandy soil around the house. One end was battered, so it seemed pointed.

"I put it there to remind me of my first trip to the Other World." He looked at me sideways from his chair, and added: "I brought it back from there."

We were silent for a while. I expected him to say something more about his stay in the Other World, to describe how he'd brought the stone or the reason why. He looked toward the red horizon, slowly rocking his head backwards and forwards, as if each newly spoken word would be too much. My curiosity was gradually dwindling. I felt sleepy.

"Kevin, I'm going to sleep. See you in the morning."

"Ok. After breakfast proceed with the exercise. You need to do it long and hard before you move on to the next one."

The image of the stone he'd brought from the Other World was before my eyes when I fell asleep.

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„"There's a technique, Filip, which is worth more then a thousand words. The Chinese say something similar - one picture is worth ten thousand words." Kevin spoke in a way that was already familiar to me, slowly, with pauses, looking over my head or into the distance, so he seemed partially absent. "The technique that you'll now learn has such value because it allows us to understand depths which words cannot reach. Its name isn't important; its essence is the successive changing of viewpoints. It's an introduction to changing realities, but also enables increased consciousness, releases energy and provides a new understanding of things and phenomena."

I followed his words with close attention. It was a privilege to be in this place and simply receive such knowledge.

"Man's goal is to survive in all possible circumstances, or, you may say, self-preservation. The human ego appears on the stage of consciousness when atman no longer sees itself as an observer of life and begins to restrict itself by identifying with the viewpoints it takes on. Then man mistakenly starts to think that survival comes down to the maintenance of some of these viewpoints. I'm a truck driver, I'm a scientist, or I'm the father of a family..." He seemed to be answering my unspoken questions. "Man is released from the illusion of life when he stops playing the life game in which he was a participant and takes on the observer's viewpoint. That's the goal of the next exercise."

He continued by pointing with his index finger at the items on the table: "This is how you're going to do it: Look at any object in a relaxed, receptive way. Observe it for a few seconds. Then, identify yourself with it, get into it and feel that you're that object... I'll repeat, you are that object at that moment. Now, from that object's viewpoint, look at your surroundings. From that same viewpoint, select another object from the surrounding and look at it. Watch it for a few seconds, then identify yourself with it, feel how it feels and feel that you are now that object. As that other object now observe your surroundings for a few seconds and select the next object you'll be looking at, then merge into it, identify yourself with it and feel yourself as that object. Do you understand me? First, you look at an object, then you identify with it, and from its viewpoint perceive the surrounding and select the next object whose viewpoint you'll takeover. Then you look for the next object, and so on throughout the process."

He looked at me questioningly for a few seconds. I nodded in affirmation and he said emphatically: "Here's an example. You look at this bowl on the table for a short time. When you get a clear impression of the bowl, project your consciousness into it. Get in it, identify with it and feel how it feels. As soon as you achieve that look around as though you're that bowl, select the next object, for instance this knife, identify yourself with it, feel how it feels, be it. Again, look around, and from this new viewpoint, select an object, this chair for example, identify with it, be the chair and observe your surroundings from that viewpoint. This exercise is preparation for transfer to a different physical reality. If you're able to take on and adopt any viewpoint, you'll always be able to choose the one which best fits the situation. Is anything unclear?"

"Absolutely not."

"Ok, after half an hour or so move on to the next level of the exercise. The procedure is the same as the previous one, except that you do it with imaginary objects, situations and beings. For example, focus on the image of the Empire State Building. Identify yourself with it and, as that building, look down on the passers-by. Choose a person, identify with him, and from his viewpoint look at the car you see on the street. Then, from that viewpoint, focus on the moon. In your mind get into it, identify with it and from the moon's viewpoint select a star. And so on. Do it for half an hour, one hour. There are several definitions of freedom. In this context, freedom is the ability to take on a viewpoint at will and, from there strive to achieve your goals. In this exercise, you may have strange experiences which you didn't have in the time crackdown. I'm going for a nap."

This exercise was more interesting than the last one. Although Kevin had told me that I could expect strange phenomena and panic attacks in the first exercise, none of that had happened during those ten days. I wished for any phenomena to appear, even fear, but I'd experienced nothing but boredom.

I started changing viewpoints by concentrating on the large cactus growing around a dozen feet from the front of the house. I identified with it, felt its inner tissue, the thick white juice which filled it and the smooth outer surface that resembled thick skin. As the cactus I looked around. From the cactus's viewpoint I chose the yellow sand on the ground as the next object. I had difficulties identifying with it, because it was spread all around. I relished the feeling of being very wide and shallow, and my viewpoint was somewhere in the middle of the sandy surface. I felt the dryness of the sand in my nostrils, its tiny crystal particles and specks of yellow dust. From there I chose the stunted dry tree and observed it for a while, totally focused. I went from one object to another without any difficulties

transferring the viewpoints and I spontaneously started to vibrate the Gnostic sound formula, omazu.

I don't know how long was I practicing. My body vibrated with the sound I made. It seemed that a long time had passed when a strange thing happened to me. I took the wooden table on the terrace as a viewpoint and looked around from it for a short time. I didn't want to use the same objects twice. Finally, I noticed the stone that Kevin claimed to have brought from the Other World which was on the shelf above the front door. I concentrated on it, but there was no need to try so hard to identify with it, it attracted me like a magnet. I found myself in it and felt its hard, fragile substance like a glass without any water in it. It was still attracting me into it, as though the omazu vibrations were opening the way inside it, so I lost all sense of existence. From its viewpoint I slipped into the void without thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations or images. There was nothing but emptiness in which the omazu sound echoed silently like bees buzzing in the distance.

After some time a beautiful vision of vibrant colours emerged from the emptiness. I was standing next to a small round lake filled with clear water. It was actually a pond, not a lake; it may have been forty metres in diameter. The water was an emerald colour, its banks were covered with fine white sand, and a short distance away from the sand grew trees which looked like tropical ones. Some of them were palm trees. The lake originated from a stream, which was flowing into it from the right side like a small waterfall. Opposite where I was standing another stream was flowing out of the lake and when I looked at its course I saw that it was flowing into the nearby sea or ocean, vast blue water that you couldn't see the end of. I heard birds singing in the treetops, and the sky above the trees was blue with a few white clouds. I could smell ripe tropical fruit, and the tiny drops of water from the waterfall were falling on my body,

cooling me like a spray. When I turned around I saw a small cave, or rather a deep cut in the rock. I scanned the surrounding area which seemed beautiful to me. I saw fish with colourful fins and bright blue bodies moving slowly and silently through the clear water.

The scenery looked familiar, as if I'd once known it and had now returned. Yes, I suddenly recognized it. It was the landscape from my childhood fantasies. For a moment I was confused as to how that had happened. How was it possible? Had my repeated fantasies created a perfect copy? Or were those fantasies coming because I was in contact with that landscape? Then, as I awoke, I remained paralyzed for a moment because of the condition I was in. This was not a vision, it was a real landscape. How had I achieved this, what had happened, what was this place? While those thoughts were swirling through my mind a strong feeling of happiness and freedom engulfed me.

I forgot how I'd got there, what I wanted and how I was related to this beautiful environment. I didn't find a conclusive answer in my mind. I was fully present here and now, and that's how it was supposed to be. I approached the water, clean and transparent like a large liquid crystal containing life. I stepped in it up to my ankles and noticed that I was in my everyday clothes. I took them off and went into the water up to my chest, although I could have done that dressed too. It would have made no difference. When the water is so clear you expect it to be cold. This was fresh, but pleasantly warm. It had an invisible healing power. It was drawing the traces of old injuries from me, filling me with energy and enthusiasm. I immersed myself in the water and began to dive with gentle hand movements.

Fine sand rippled at the bottom, I saw shells and blue fish swimming slowly around me. I could hear music which seemed to be coming from an organ, but it was quiet and suited to the vision of the lake. In the middle, at the

bottom, I saw a large green crystal which looked like an emerald. The rays of light through the water played over it, making it seem like a green fire was bursting from it. I reached out to touch it and then I returned to the state which was close to the void and thoughtlessness. Everything disappeared, the fish, the sand, the water... There was just me and the green crystal which was getting bigger and bigger and was opening its green depths before me. I dove into it as though it was made of liquid and at that point time lost its sequence and meaning. It isn't very easy to talk about this experience now. I experienced infinity appearing and disappearing again and again.

I felt a sense of the sanctity of that moment. I experienced it as though it was outside everything that existed, like it came from some other space, time and world. The solid shell that formed my personality fell apart at that point and was recast into something indescribable, a completely different form of existence to the one I was used to. At the same time, it was the feeling that I'd finally arrived at the final destination to which I'd made my way from timelessness.

Then time started. I existed again and had desires and goals. I saw the crystal mountain in front of me, whose peak was disappearing into the heights my sight couldn't reach. I started to climb up it with ease, I was weightless. The crystal stairway twisted left and right and as I stepped on it, I heard vibrant music which was somehow connected to it. Its tones were higher and higher. Just above me I saw a plateau and on it the vague outline of a man wearing a red cloak standing with his raised hand holding a baton pointing upwards.

When I approached, I saw him quite clearly. He was the magician from the Major Arcana tarot deck. He stood in front of a crystal table on which occult symbols of the four elements: fire, water, earth and air were placed. He

pointed at them with his left hand. I'd known that card for a long time, meditated on it many times and believed that I understood it. Now, its meaning dawned on me completely, as never before. What contributed to that was the fact that this time it wasn't a picture, but a living man, and the objects in front of him were tangible. He had long black hair, tied with a band around his head like an American Apache, long bony fingers, and the symbol of infinity was hovering above his head. Feline green eyes above a nose with flared nostrils and the thin beard and moustache on his tanned face gave him an oriental look. In a different situation he would've looked dangerous, but now he seemed friendly.

I realized that he wasn't the personification of power, as I'd believed for years, but of activity. He didn't accumulate power, but conducted it. His real name was Conductor, and not Magician. That was the lesson I learned in an instant - to be a conductor from higher levels of existence to the earthly plane. When this thought appeared in my mind he received it telepathically and nodded. I could climb further up the crystal staircase.

On the next plateau the High Priestess was sitting at the gate which represented the entrance to the great mysteries. I recognized it at once, because the Tree of Life was behind her. She was sitting between the light and darkness, whose symbols were the two pillars of the Temple of Solomon. In the short time my gaze focused on her I realized that she was an intermediary on the path to a deeper reality. This wasn't a picture either, but a living priestess. She gave me a friendly nod and said in a resonant, high pitched voice like the sound made by birds: "I've been expecting you."

I instantly realized that the High Priestess appeared under the names Persephone, Isis and Artemis. Behind her, I saw a veil stretched between poles which prevented access

to the uninformed and allowed only the initiated entry into the mysteries. On it were pictures of pomegranates as symbols of duty, and the Priestess's blue clothing signified spirituality. Isis's horns on her head spoke of the duality of everything in existence, and the round sun between them pointed to the achievement of oneness and fulfilment. The sun cross on her chest alluded to the balance between men and women.

She held a half-open book in her lap on which Torah was written, which contained esoteric knowledge. Under her left foot, I saw the moon, the symbol of mastering intuition. I knew from before that the High Priestess represents the relationship with the unconscious spirit, which cannot be achieved through rational reasoning, but only through symbols and intuition. Now this knowledge was implanted in me.

I looked up and saw the vague outline of the third Major Arcana, the Empress. I wanted to continue my ascent towards her, but something was preventing me. It was a strange powerlessness, all the energy had seeped out of my limbs. Moreover, some force was pulling me back. I resisted for a short time, and then gave up. I started to fall downwards, first slowly, then faster and faster. I flew by the High Priestess and the Magician. Their outlines become blurred. I was caught in a powerful vortex which was sucking me sideways. I blacked out; I could barely see anything around me. At one point, the movement stopped. I was in a clean space, levitating. Below me I could see a row of family houses covered with dark roof tiles, people, and cars parked in front of the houses. I was drawn to an isolated house with a garden. Although I was hovering above it, I could see inside. An old woman with grey hair was sitting in the living room by the window embroidering. In the next room, which looked like a study because of the bookshelves on two walls, I saw a middle-aged man

hunched over a desk reading. He was attracting me like a powerful magnet. I began to approach him, coming from above. I could see the details on his desk, books and papers on which he wrote notes, underlining them with coloured pencils. They were books about theatre directing, and when I realized that the man's force of attraction became irresistible. I suddenly came down and merged with him.

That morning, I felt very strange. I couldn't work out what had happened.

In my room I was carefully reading Peter de Brome's text on Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, writing down several elements which were, according to him, the essence of theatre. Although I'd read a lot of material on Artaud, the text seemed new to me, I'd never come across anything like it before. I was truly mesmerized. I heard my mother calling me from her room: "Walter, let's have a cup of coffee." It was her second or third call for the morning coffee drinking ritual. This time it made me irritable. I wanted to fully understand de Brome's ideas about Artaud, and for that I needed a short period of calm comtemplation to compare my knowledge with his views.

Artaud claimed that in the theatre text had become a tyrant over meaning, and therefore he proposed that theatre be created from a single language which is halfway between thought and language. He described spiritual states in physical terms, and believed that all theatre was physical expression in space.

This was too extreme for my first theatre directing. They certainly wouldn't allow me to direct such a drama in our amateur theatre in Leiden, although some have claimed that it's on the threshold of the avant-garde. I was torn between two feelings. I didn't want to get involved in a conflict with the theatre management and make that my first and last directing, and at the same time I couldn't accept directing in the out-dated way the management called classic. This meant that I had to make a compromise between the two extreme approaches.

I'd recently turned forty-eight and when I balanced the accounts of my life, I had to admit that I was a bit of a loser. I'd remain that to the end if I didn't succeed in directing the way I'd imagined it. My current life was clear to me, like a blank sheet of paper. I was divorced, living with my old, boring mother. My son was a decent young man who saw me as a nuisance who failed to see anything though to the end. He wasn't wrong there. I'd attended a Russian language course for three months, and then dropped it. I'd stuck it out a bit longer on the Chinese course. Bridge had been a source of pleasure for a year, but that gradually wore off too. I went to the Bridge Club for another few months after that out of pure inertia. Only two areas had fulfilled me in recent years, occultism and reading literature about theatre.

I'd discovered occultism and oriental philosophy at university, and then followed Yoga, Buddhism, Zen, and the modern system of self-development - EST, Scientology, magic, Meher Baba's teachings... For a while I'd been an associate of the Guardians of Western Tradition, whose headquarters were located on the English Isles in the English Channel. My late father hadn't hidden his strong criticism of my occult books; he claimed that anyone who read such literature went crazy sooner or later. He'd burned all my books twice with an expression on his face

like he was destroying toxic parasites. He gave up a few years before his death; it seemed to me that he'd surrendered. This was the area where I showed my dominant personality trait – giving up.

I began to practice pranayama exercises several times, but then I'd find an excuse to stop. I started to do Ernest Wood's concentration exercises. After a while I'd give up, and then begin again, and so on throughout all those years. The only thing I persisted in was reading literature. I gained a lot of theoretical knowledge, after reading a few pages I could say whether the author had any valuable experience or, after reading fifty books, whether he'd written the fifty-first.

I don't like to brag about my theoretical knowledge in fields such as the theatre whose essence lies in practice, but I felt that I knew more about avant-garde theatre than many who are considered experts. In my studies of the history of the theatre I started from Iamblichus's words about the mystery plays, which are identical to true theatre: *"The play really has a mysterious meaning, indescribable in words... It is a perfect performance, superior to the mind, a sublime play of symbols whose irresistible power allows the mind awareness of the divine."*

I was truly fascinated by the works of Artaud, Peter Brook and Polish director Jerzi Grotowski. I knew everything about them, but such knowledge is worth little if it isn't put into practice, nourished by ideas, so that it breaks the consciousness of the viewer, who should be completely changed by drama, more deeply and fully than by Freudian chatter which boils down to circulating around hot porridge for many months and years.

Peter Brook fascinated me the most, when after dealing with Shakespeare's dramas, he penetrated provocative theatre and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. His

ideas about theatre published in The Empty Space had considerable influence on me. That is supreme understanding of the theatrical atmosphere, because the void is the source of everything, all energy originates from it, just like all the ideas and all the manifestations of this universe. There is nothing more perfect than emptiness, because emptiness is everything. His valuable insight that the director is the central force of the drama found common ground with Jerzi Grotowski's experimental theatre.

This ingenious Pole brought into the theatre what, and I can say this without showing off, I'd wanted to apply in my directing before I'd even heard of him – the inclusion of the viewers in the drama and their confrontation with the actors. This element would certainly be present in the play I'd be directing. These two elements are the culmination of the play; I haven't the slightest doubt about that: the void as the source of everything, which I've learned from Brook, and the inclusion of the viewers in the drama, so the difference between them and the actors disappears.

"Walter, your coffee is almost cold," my mother's voice reached me.

I sat in the armchair opposite my mother and sipped my coffee. It was lukewarm, and it'd lost most of its flavour, but that often happened during our morning ritual. I remembered the day when I'd had coffee with my mother for the first time. Before me her sister was her partner for morning coffee. When she died my mother wasn't able to get used to drinking it by herself. It seemed to me that my mother missed the communal coffee drinking more than she did her late sister. One morning, while I was in my room reading the newspaper, she stood at the door and in a pleading voice asked me, "Walter, would you have coffee with me?"

"Yes, why not," I said, and continued to read the newspaper.

Then too, she warned me that the coffee was getting cold. I entered the dining room, took a cup of coffee from the table, drank it while standing and returned to the room to my newspaper. She didn't say anything to me then, but complained to our relatives later: "Where's the coffee, he said, drank it down while standing and left. What kind of coffee drinking is that? Coffee is for sitting down, having a chat, talking about your problems. And he, just like that..."

This time I listened patiently to her stories about our neighbours and relatives that I'd already heard several times before. The sound of the phone ringing put an end to my misery. "It's Rudolf. I have good news for you. The director has decided to give you a chance. You can direct your play. But you'll need to submit your finished script within a month. "

"Thanks, Rudy. I'll manage, it's all at my fingertips."

"You're far too optimistic. What you read to me needs a lot of finishing touches. But the main thing is that the old man has agreed to give you a chance. We should meet as soon as possible. I have some materials about performances, which you can use in your play."

"You're not thinking about those guys who, under the guise of art, puke over the crowd, cut themselves with razors and masturbate in public."

"There's that too. You can choose what suits you. Come here, I know you, you won't regret it."

I went to Rudolph's with some hesitation and, at the same time, a feeling of gratitude that he'd told me the news I'd been waiting for such a long time and which had obviously made him happy too.

He received me in his living room, where like in the majority of Dutch family homes the window covered almost the whole wall facing the street. The room looked like part of the street. The leather armchairs were worn from use, and the furniture gave the impression of serenity and security. Two large paintings with Dutch motifs drew my attention. One was of a grey sky with a Dutch windmill in the distance, and the other a big field of yellow tulips. Rudolf spent most of his time at his desk, serene and happy.

He and his wife, Rita, a small freckled woman with pale blue eyes, spent years there without children, they were enough for each other. His offer to share his opinion on modern performances was unexpected. Over the past several years he'd been warning me, with good intentions, that I should calm down and control myself. He considered my focus on Artaud and Grotowski's avant-garde theatre inappropriate, like a form of intellectual immaturity. He commented on my response that he'd become ossified in his out-dated understanding of theatre with a smile: "If a man is not a revolutionary while young, he probably lacks heart. But if he is not conservative when he gets old, then he certainly lacks brains."

Rudolf had always had a conservative and reserved attitude to life phenomena since I first met him. Now, such a man found value in modern performances and had invited me to talk about them.

"I haven't mentioned this before but in recent years and months performance art has attracted my attention and you could include some of its elements in your work. That's obvious to anyone who is open to avant-garde theatre, because the deepest tendencies to leave a mark in the time in which we live are expressed through the body."

"It's impossible to express criticism of the social relations in which we live though the body, and that's what they're trying to do."

"That's not something I invented in some reversal of my conceptions. Cultural theorists have concluded that a powerful expression of social and sexual normality is manifested through the body. The body is also a place of discipline and punishment for deviations from the established norms. When the spirit which defies discipline and is ready to face social penalties in order to present its message is in a normal body"- he glanced at me askance - "the body becomes the most powerful artistic medium. All performance arts use the body as a means of artistic expression. Gunter Brus used to drink his urine during performances or masturbate while singing the Austrian national anthem. John Duncan used to invite women to abuse him on the stage. "

"Then every unfulfilled man can pose as an artist and present a performance which will sicken people."

"Not every person who performs is an artist, just like not every painter is an artist."

"I can accept what Frank Bruno said. The body is a canvas for presenting what is beautiful, sacred and indescribable; it is a media for the expression of pain, love, and hate. We all bleed," I said, looking for a point of contact with him.

"I'm glad you mentioned him. I don't think you should turn your play into a performance, but you should accept some elements. You know, the essence of a performance is that the artist himself becomes his own work of art. In that way you would have gone beyond the point Artaud reached."

I left Rudolf feeling slightly unsettled. I wasn't ready to accept everything he'd cited in the sudden transform-

ation from his rigid world into one of unkempt rebellion, but there was something I'd been seeking for a long time in his analysis. One of the tendencies of performance art that I'd accepted a long time ago, because it fit in with my deepest aspirations, was the full involvement of the audience in the action. Forcing the audience to become an inseparable part of the drama. The essence of such an approach is becoming involved in conflict with society because of its basic values.

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I couldn't breathe, because the water was in my nostrils. I felt the sudden weight of my body. I opened my eyes slowly. In front of me, in the clear water, stood a large emerald green stone, with a green light reflecting from its flat sides. I got up slowly and my head was above the water. The water was dripping down my hair into my eyes. I wiped the water away with my hand and looked around me. The sun was approaching the horizon, illuminating a small waterfall, a sandy shore and palm trees.

I got out of the lake and sat down on the warm sand. This place would have been wonderful if I hadn't been alone. Ecstasy with what I'd experienced was mixed with a feeling of loneliness or, to be more precise, I should say abandonment. That was overshadowed by strong confusion. It was as though I'd awakened from a dream which had great value for me, which I couldn't remember, and which had immediately faded away and disappeared. There was nobody around me, not my children, or my friends, or Great-Uncle Ivan. I even missed Kevin. In this confusing abandonment my knowledge of the Tarot, the books I'd read and my experiences from Barcelona and the dark room were of no use. I wondered how many people had ended up so recklessly trapped in the Other World. A scary thought came to me, what if I was stuck here forever? All the beauty of the place would disappear.

I entered a shallow cave and wanted to lie down, but the sand was cold.

I went out and came to a place where the sand stopped. I found plants with large soft leaves there. I picked a big bundle, took them to the cave, and spread them out on the ground. I lay down on the leaves and let my imagination run free. Images came to me, of my children, Victor, Nemo, Catalonia Square in Barcelona and that strange stone that Kevin had brought back from here, from the Other World. Now I believed he was telling the truth. I fell asleep.

I had so many dreams. As soon as I awoke I forgot them all except the last one. I was sitting with Kevin at the table in his dining room. He smiled, holding a stone in his hands and repeated like a mantra: "Change your viewpoint, identify with it, change your viewpoint, identify with it." It seemed to me that his words had woken me up. I opened my eyes expecting to see him, hoping that I was in the Primary World, and that he'd reveal the deeper meaning of those words to me. He wasn't there. It was dawn, I saw the still surface of the lake, the sand on its shores and the palm trees on the other side. Some bird made a short shrill cry from the top of a palm tree. In response to her call a fish jumped out of the still surface of the water. That took me back to the present time. I was in the Other World, and two feelings were still swirling within me. I'd succeeded in a venture which a lot of people dream about, and few ever achieve and sadness was turning into the fear that I'd spend the rest of my life here, away from the people and life I was used to. I was a prisoner in this beautiful cage.

I sat on my mat made of leaves and took a deep breath of warm air filled with the aroma of tropical fruits. I felt hungry. I remembered seeing bananas on the nearby tree to the right of the entrance to my cave. They were half the size of ordinary bananas, red, like the ones I'd seen at the market in Barcelona. Their flesh was pink and had the same smell as normal ones. I ate five bananas and my hunger disappeared. Again I was gripped by the thought of being a slave in this place, which was probably the Other World, although I hadn't found its description in the Incunabula Papers I'd read.

I remembered the dream and Kevin's words, change your viewpoint, identify with it. Perhaps those words were the key to my return to the Primary World. I sat in the zazen position, which I used during meditation and started taking on different viewpoints and identifying with them. At the same time, I spontaneously started to do epiphysis breathing and to chant omazu. My thoughts ran wild for a while, and then I got into the exercise and almost forgot where I was and what I was doing. The objects around me came alive in a new, hitherto unknown way. They had their own internal life different from their appearance. At one point, I identified with a fuzzy cloud above the palm tree tops. New space opened up to me. I looked at the ground below it, the transparent water of the small lake and the green crystal at its bottom, the trees, the ocean shore and my body in the zazen position. The fuzzy cloud had a consciousness, I realized that I was the first human being to identify with it, and that there was no difference between us.

I think I changed several dozen viewpoints. At one point I stopped and looked carefully around without searching for the next viewpoint. I knew that a long time had passed because the sun had moved higher in the sky. I looked behind me to the cave where I'd slept. It reminded

me of the entrance to Kevin's house. I remembered the stone on the shelf above the entrance. Its image was very clear in my mind, as if it was real. I entered it, identified with it and then felt myself being drawn into it with increasing power. Inside the stone there was only a dry hardness which restricted movement. Then its interior faded away and transformed into a void in which there was nothing but grey light and the sound of omazu.

I don't know how long I was in that state. At one moment I felt a soft touch on my face, different to the cold, hard stone interior. I was startled and opened my eyes. Kevin was sitting in a chair close to me, leaning over and watching me carefully. He smiled, and said with relief, "Welcome back to the Primary World."

The wires of an invisible instrument were humming loudly in my head. The things around me were vague and fuzzy, and my breathing was rapid and shallow because I didn't have enough air. "My head is buzzing, I can't see clearly," I said.

"Don't worry, this is normal, the vibrations are different there. You'll feel better soon."

The pictures of the objects around me were sharpening and I was soon able to see them clearly. "That was the Other World, wasn't it?"

He smiled conspiratorially and said, "Who knows? It's hard to tell where you ended up. There are more worlds, but most people reach the Other World first. Describe what you experienced. Did you communicate with humans or human-like beings?"

"I didn't meet anyone. I had the impression that there was never anyone there... That place was an exact copy of the vision I had in my childhood fantasies. I must say that now it all seems like a dream."

"Our entire life is a dream, that one there and this one here. In one place, Edgar Allan Poe, you've probably heard of him or read him, wrote: Everything we see and we've ever seen is only a dream within a dream."

"This experience now seems like a long, lucid dream."

The same conspiratorial smile appeared on his face again. "You seem to have brought something from that dream here." Still smiling he pointed to my shins. They were covered in bits of the green leaves I'd knelt on while meditating in the cave. That simple proof surprised me. No, that's an inadequate expression. I was stunned and for a while wasn't able to say a single word. I bent down and used my nails to remove a sizable leaf from my right leg, which was moist with sweat. "I'll keep it pressed in my diary."

Without speaking, Kevin looked up at his stone from the Other World. "Maybe next time you'll bring something better."

"Now I believe this experience was true," I said and excitement stirred in me again. "I found myself in a beautiful place, really beautiful. A lake of crystal clear water, surrounded by trees, a huge green crystal in it...or was it an emerald... entry into the world of Tarot archetypes, but they weren't pictures, but living beings. I was able to communicate with them telepathically. Now, while I'm sitting here I'm starting to appreciate that experience. I felt lost there. I realize now that from the Other World, through an emerald tunnel, I went to another, even higher world."

"It's possible. During one session a traveller I knew entered four parallel worlds in a row."

"The deciding factor in my returning here seems to have been your stone. When, after many changes of viewpoints I finally focused on it, I found myself here."

He shook his head: "That stone itself does not have any value. Any object which you bring here serves as a gateway between two worlds. The leaf you brought on your leg will serve the same purpose."

"I wish I could bring the big green crystal from the bottom of the lake here. I believe I could enter a big number of parallel worlds through it."

"You can bring and take everything that enters your aura. I already told you, some passengers took knives, axes, lighters, various tools, and books there. How big was that crystal?"

"As I recall, about two feet high and slightly narrower."

"The next time you cross over you should embrace it with your arms or knees. It should fit into your aura for sure. Now go to sleep, and then write down all the things you can remember. The memories fade very quickly."

I'd felt awake until then, but after his words I suddenly felt really drowsy. I got up from the chair and made my way to my room. I thought this was the most valuable experience I'd ever had, and certainly the strangest and I owed it all to Kevin. I turned at the door: "Thank you for this. I have no words to explain how I feel. I'm gradually starting to realize the value of the experience."

He smiled kind-heartedly, more with his eyes than his mouth. At that moment, he looked like Great-Uncle Ivan. All those people who appear at the crossroads of our lives look like twin brothers. I remembered Homolje. Although this part of California didn't look like Homolje, it provoked the same feelings in me. As I slipped into a dream of Kevin's face mingled with that of Great-Uncle Ivan, their homes and environments merged and the scent I could smell while falling asleep was the same.

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In the dream I heard a voice calling me from far away: "Filip! Filip!" I opened my eyes. Kevin was standing by my bed in the semi-darkness. Light was coming from the hallway.

"Yes?"

"You've got an urgent phone call from home."

The phone was next to the front door. "Yes, it's me."

It was my ex-wife. She sounded agitated and that woke me up immediately: "Peter has pneumonia. He's in hospital. "

"What happened?"

"The doctors don't know. He's having serious problems breathing, they're giving him oxygen. Come home immediately. He's in a bad way."

"I'll get the first plane. I'm sure he'll be fine."

My legs were shaking; I moved to the nearest armchair and sat down. Kevin was standing opposite me, looking at me curiously. "My son's in hospital... pneumonia ... can't breathe. I need to get back immediately."

As a man who travelled around the world a lot, he had no problems getting me a ticket home. I flew from San Diego, via Washington DC and Amsterdam, to Belgrade.

The KLM plane from Washington to Amsterdam was half empty. I stretched out over three empty seats at the

back of the plane, got a blanket and pillow from the stewardess and tried to sleep. If it hadn't been for my fear about Peter, this stay would have been the most valuable period of my life. I tried to get rid of the fear using the methods I'd used in recent years. They didn't work. When you fear for a child's life even the most effective methods fail. Dark thoughts swirled around me like ominous ravens. I'd see him choking and holding out his hand for me to help him. After a while, another thought occurred to me, so my attention was again tied to his agony.

I'm not religious in the conventional sense. Going to church, communion, lighting candles, that's not me. Now, with a clenched jaw, trembling hands and my head tilted upward, I began to pray. It was a spontaneous prayer, not to God as Orthodox Christians perceive him, but what was coming out of me was the way I felt, to the cosmic force which created the world and everything in it: "Help me, let Peter survive. If you need to, punish me, and spare the child. I've done all kinds of things in my life, I deserve to be punished, but have mercy on him."

I started to do the changing viewpoints technique with objects I couldn't see, because my eyes were closed. I started with Kevin's house, then I took on its position, followed by the large cactus in front of the house, the ground covered with yellow sand, the chair in the living room, the magical stone brought from the Other World, the cloud above the house. As I did this exercise the fear in me gradually dwindled and the belief that Peter's condition would improve grew. Then I was overtaken by the firm conviction that the barrier to Peter's disease had been set by the same forces which had followed me since the implanting in the space station, whose actions I hadn't completely removed during the processes in Barcelona. I knew that everything would be ok with my son, and that

conviction went hand in hand with a slight tinge of fear that this situation may still have a tragic ending.

The images of my arrival in El Cajon, my conversations with Kevin, the strange experience of entering the Other World, the picture of the small clear lake, the waterfall which filled it, the red bananas I'd eaten, all passed through my mind one after the other. I remembered the green leaves that been stuck to my lower leg and which I'd pressed in my diary, my life mission to transfer energy from the higher levels of the cosmos to the earthly plane. At this point, my body began to stiffen and my breathing deepened, but then came the calming thought that this was the fate of every human being at the beginning of his personal development.

The profound insight I gained when I'd given myself up to the experience with the High Priestess. The book of knowledge which she held in her hands, the horns on her head and the two opposing pillars had illuminated the polarity of everything that exists in the human being and life, and life in the Other World was no different. Why hadn't I been allowed to climb the stairs to the end of the crystal mountain and encounter all the contents of the Tarot Major Arcana?

Was Kevin a true teacher, who many people talk about and who I'd dreamed of during my youth, or just a man who'd gained experience of traveling to parallel worlds before me and was able to convey it to me? The latter. The myth of the master who appears at the crucial moments in our lives and spiritual development is a toy which we all play with from time to time, no matter how much common sense tells us that we have strayed into the fairy tale world of our errors. What was mysterious was the experience of being caught in the vortex and then the man who briefly appeared below me, who was reading literature about the theatre after which I lost consciousness. What happened

there? Some undefined feeling of connection with the theatre... How was he connected to me?

The stewardess woke me up to put my seat belt on before landing at Schiphol. It was already late morning. I couldn't eat breakfast, so I had an orange juice and coffee. The thoughts that had occupied me before I fell asleep welled up again. The thought of my sick son awoke a slight fear, but this was soon replaced with the certainty that I'd find him well. It was a reflection of some inner state of balance, the nucleus which had become activated in me, and radiated over everything around me.

This nucleus had its own wisdom which was not based on acquired knowledge. It had been acting from within me all the time, but I hadn't been open enough to accept it. Now I was. Olga, my ex-wife, opened the apartment door, jumped back in surprise that I'd managed to come so quickly and said: "Don't worry, everything's fine."

"I know, where's Peter?"

Peter was on the floor, engrossed in a game with a small electric train. He jumped up from the floor and hugged me. I was overcome with a deep joy to see him healthy. At the same time Kevin's face appeared to me, the image of the stone above his door and the thought that I had once again been cheated at the doorway to higher cognition.

17

"It's a virus. Now's the time for viruses'."

The idea of viruses has ruled in my former profession in the last twenty years. Whenever they don't know which diagnosis to give my fellow doctors say - a viral disease. I was told the same by a friend and former colleague, whom many consider the best diagnostician in the hospital. I'd been suffering from a dry cough for more than ten days, it made my intercostal muscles ache, and my throat was ripped to shreds. Even moving my eyes gave me a severe pain in the head. My entire body was overcome with weakness.

"I'll prescribe you a good cough syrup," said my colleague.

"It's no good; I've been taking it for ten days with no effect."

"Then let's start with antibiotics. You've had it for a long time now."

"There's no way I'm taking antibiotics. They do more harm than good. "

"You have a point there," he said apologetically. "Then stick to tea and aspirin."

I dragged myself home, opened the window and went straight to bed. That didn't help either because lying down made me dizzy. I had a pain in the back of my neck and limbs and was totally exhausted. Obviously there was no

medicine for a virus; the only thing I could do was let it run its course.

I spent my time lying around, going over the last year's experiences in my head. Those were valuable experiences, close to science fiction, but while I was lying in bed wiped out by viruses they were gradually losing their significance. A wise man, perhaps Spinoza, once said that no one can philosophize while suffering from toothache. He was right. Now I needed to get better and resume everyday life without pain or vertigo. Despite my condition I decided to get up by using every ounce of my will power. Weaknesses should be defeated. I strained and struggled to get on my feet. The vertigo was stronger than while I was lying down. I had to hold onto a chair. My mouth filled with salty liquid, my stomach cramped and I vomited its entire contents onto the floor beside the bed. It was horrible to see the regurgitated food on the floor, but I felt a bit better. I went back to bed. I didn't have much will left.

I remembered the event in Barcelona when I'd faced the dragon. It was an unpleasant experience which had almost driven me to suicide, but there'd been no physical sickness like now. I wondered what was going on with Robinho. Was he still searching for the true teaching which would release him from this planetary dungeon? Memories of the passage to the Other World came to me in full clarity. If only I could transfer myself to a parallel universe and enter the green crystal at the bottom of the small lake this terrible state I was in would come to an end. That wasn't possible now. I was trapped in a cage of languid flesh, sweating, coughing and vomiting.

I heard a quiet humming. A bee flew into the room through the open window, and started to circle around my bookshelves. Memories of my last stay in Homolje at Great-Uncle Ivan's and my initiation into the bee nation appeared before my eyes with lots of details, colours and sounds.

Parts of our conversations, the starry sky, the dwarf who'd escaped because I looked away too soon, Great-Uncle's stories about bees full of love and knowledge, and scenes from my initiation all lined up one after another. My life had radically changed since then. I'd lost interest in my academic career, in completing my doctorate, or writing a study about human nature like men tend to do as they get older. All my communications had become restricted, I no longer talked about what was in the past and what the future might hold, time was increasingly related to NOW. Soon there would only be the here and now, because that was where I was living. All my life I'd wanted to know and have everything and now I realized that I didn't need anything but myself, whole and without residue.

What else awaited me in the future? I'd be the skeleton of my own experiences and would gradually immerse myself in the unenlightened parts of my being. I'd encountered myself and there's nothing else after that, just the undiscovered parts of the self. That's the meeting of the interim, mortal I with the eternal, immortal self and my future life would waver between the two. I was on the edge of the abyss, with the vacuous experiences of the world behind me, for which I felt nothing, and blurred spaces in front of me. They invoked dull fears of the possible danger waiting out there, and at the same time the desire to rush in no matter the cost. There was the possibility of backing down when confronted by such dangers, as I'd done when I entered bardo, and returning to the old games which had lost their charm having been played again and again, or to rush ahead. I was constantly haunted by the feeling that someone who'd walked the same path before me and headed into the world of greater freedoms was waiting for me on the other side. I suspected that those beings had been waiting for me to join them for a long time, but I was deaf to their calls. Now was the time to expose myself to the new and unknown.

Omazu...I saw a bee flying in a figure eight, coming closer to me. It finally landed on my sweaty chest and settled there. Would it, with its sting, inject sacrificial poison to heal me? No, it wiggled around that small space tickling me with its hairy legs. Serenity swept over me and then I came to the sudden decision to achieve the mission I'd come into this world for. I stood up abruptly, took my diary from the bookshelves and opened the page at the pressed leaf I'd brought back from the Other World stuck to my shin. I put the open diary on the night table in front of me and started to do the changing viewpoints exercise.

I identified with the sweaty pillow on the bed, from it I saw a bee which had settled on the glass of the open window and I strained to see the surrounding area from its bulging eyes. I tried to penetrate the pressed leaf from my diary. I had difficulties entering and spreading around its thin tissue. I remembered the green crystal from the bottom of the lake, entered it and stayed there for a while thinking about the next object. I continued to go from one absent object to another. I had no sense of the time I spent doing that. The pressed leaf from the Other World occupied my mind, and then I entered it again. This time I felt the familiar attraction, an invisible force sucked me into its tissue and I slipped into the void.

The path which led up the crystal mountain emerged from the void. I felt relief and something akin to happiness on recognizing this familiar world. Up there, on the crystal plateau, the Magician was waiting for me with the same welcoming expression on his face which I'd remembered several times after returning from Kevin's. I passed him. The High Priestess gave me the same warm welcome and this time I thought I knew better what was hiding behind her veil. The power which had pulled me back the first time was no longer there. In its place was a strong force which

was dragging me up the crystal mountain with great power. I moved rapidly, almost flying past the next few Arcana.

I stopped briefly at the seventh Arcana, the Chariot, pulled by two sphinxes, black and white. I felt their polarized energies pulling me in opposite directions, and as soon as I'd accepted that both of them were part of me, I was able to go on. The energy I felt in my whole body was gaining strength and I was passing the Arcana faster and faster, realizing that they were the archetypal situations in life I had to go through.

I passed through the thirteenth Arcana, Death, with ease. That Arcana used to reject me strongly, but now its true meaning dawned on me: death is preparation for new life; it's the phoenix which burns down so as to be resurrected in a new life.

At the very top I faced the last Arcana, the World. I gazed open mouthed at the powerful scene before me. Four symbolic animals stood around it, symbolizing the four cosmic elements. Each of them greeted me in its own way: the bull bellowed deeply, the lion let out a mighty roar of welcome, the eagle uttered a shrill piercing cry, and the man said with understanding, as if declaring a mystical welcome - Arelena!

That Arcana was on the highest plateau, at the end of the path I'd climbed. In the middle of the scene, a naked young woman, covered with a transparent veil, rested the tip of one foot on a snake which was biting its own tail thus closing the circle around her. The whole scene indicated the necessity to concentrate all elements and energies in a unique Oneness. The woman, who was protected by the snake bent into a full circle, represented the metaphysical synthesis of absolute truth which placed the one who had reached it beyond any deception. The woman was holding two short batons in her hands, similar to the Magician's

stick in the first Arcana, symbolizing that she governs the process of the integration of opposite polarities and is therefore able to operate freely on the astral plane.

While looking at the elements of the last Arcana I became aware that they provoked knowledge from my unconsciousness and that was exactly what their role was. Whoever has power over those elements identifies with the laws of the universe and acts as an instrument of their fulfilment. Such a man cannot be defeated in his activities because he can't desire anything that is contrary to the eternal laws.

I'd come to the end of this path in the Other World, I'd seen the life situations which I had to go through, but I knew that I'd have to pass through it a few more times. This wasn't the end, but the beginning of that pilgrimage. Passing through the last Arcana, I found myself in front of a dark wall. It was a wall of solid tissue; it was made of dark energy, a black light impossible to see through. I stood hesitating for a while and I finally stepped through it. Infused with a feeling of movement I gradually fell asleep, as though I was following a dark, winding path within myself.

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I regained consciousness in a dark theatre auditorium. I was able to make out the rows of chairs around me. Nobody was sitting in them, but I wasn't surprised by their emptiness. I felt that was what it was supposed to be like, the fulfilment of some expectation, but what kind exactly, I couldn't say.

The stage wasn't separated from the auditorium, as is usually the case. The stage on which the drama is played out is in fact the theatre auditorium. There was no one there but me, just rows of empty seats. Then I was overtaken by fear and I called out, to myself, for someone to come and take away the empty chairs. No one appeared. Finally, when I concentrated all of my efforts as in ritual magic, a figure slowly formed in the seat in the centre of the hall. I couldn't make out his features in the darkness, only his outline. I tried calling him to see who he was, to say something, anything. It was a though I'd lost my voice, I managed to produce a barely audible whisper. The figure slowly came into focus; it became familiar and finally condensed into the shape of Victor. I was surprised because he looked like me.

While I was searching for the right words to say to him, the blurred outline of another person was appearing in a different part of the auditorium. As his face became clearer, a shadow fell over Victor's face, he was fading away into the semi-darkness. Finally he disappeared completely, like a candle going out. It was difficult to see anything. Despite being blurred, the second face gradually came into

focus and I was able to recognize who it was. It was the face of my ex-wife. As it became clearer my feelings also sharpened, a mixture of guilt, sadness and regret because of the way I'd treated her. Again I was surprised because she too looked like me. Right behind her, in the next row, there were two figures sitting next to each other, like twins. They slowly took shape for a brief moment, just long enough for me to recognize Carlos and Gunter. They approached each other and merged into one. Once again I saw myself in that fused image.

This was repeated with the next figure whom I recognized as Vera. She was sitting at a table in the restaurant where we'd had dinner. She was eating smoked ham with olives in oil and aromatic herbs with her eyes half closed, a sublime expression on her face as though she was praying. Her gestures were similar to mine, and her face gradually changed, becoming a reflection of my face in the mirror.

The process continued with other people, as though I was sitting in a train rushing past telegraph poles. The disappearance of one person triggered the appearance of the next. A series of people who were important in my life lined up one after the other; childhood friends, work colleagues, women I'd been emotionally attached to, Robinho who'd had such a strong influence on me. All these people looked like me, the similarity becoming stronger with each new character. My children shot out from the darkness, flickering before me for a time, blending into one as tears filled my eyes, the excitement was choking me and, when I stretched out my arms to embrace them, I embraced my own image in the mirror.

The next human form came into focus much more slowly than the previous ones. There was no doubt here, it was Nemo. I wanted to thank him for pulling me out of despair in Barcelona and to tell him that he must overcome his depravity. He blinked, letting me know that he'd

received the message, but his form immediately started to waver from side to side and fade away. It occurred to me that the same depravity existed in me, and then he transformed and turned into my reflection in the mirror. The same thing happened with the next man, whom I recognized as Kevin. I remembered the thoughts of the English occultist, who I'd thought was a mistifier. By dismantling the phenomena of illusory reality, the true I always finds itself again in the cosmic game of hide and seek, until nothing else remains. Now I knew that this man created the same type of drama and I heard myself saying that thought out loud. I realized that I was the only actor in the drama, playing myself, and I was the only spectator. I looked at the chair on which I knew for certain I'd see Great-Uncle Ivan and this time I wasn't surprised to see myself.

I suddenly experienced rapture, and like a stroke of lightning I realized the truth which had evaded me not only all of my life, but all my lives so far: the overwhelming love, arelena, in which I disappears in order to appear in the character of another being, was the solution which I'd been seeking for so long.

That's when the giant bees appeared, hovering over the chairs. A loud and powerful buzzing emanated from them, making the whole stage vibrate. Their buzzing turned into the **omazu** sound. Suddenly, instead of seats, one part of the auditorium was filled with the large green stone from the Other World. It was much bigger than it had appeared to be there, its magnificent green light scattering in all directions, and the **omazu** sound transformed into the sound of **arelena**. The stone radiated an increasingly stronger emerald light spilling over the obscure characters in the audience like over my reflections in a maze with lots of mirrors. Wherever I turned, I went from myself to myself. Impatience was growing inside me, because I was

totally focused on discovering the secret I'd been searching for my whole life but, with the exception of my own images, I couldn't have anything else, couldn't find anything else, couldn't discover anything else. Only myself in an ocean of love.

My drama has convinced me that you can't run away from yourself. I can change nations, countries, planets and worlds, but from myself I have nowhere to go. The I who I'd wanted to outgrow in order to discover something new and more valuable returns to me like a permanent renewal and repetition, a snake which swallows its own tail, a phoenix that burns itself down. I am my own ancestor and descendant, director, actor and spectator. I was destined to live through my dreams in the spaces of my own being. Brook, Artaud, Grotowski and their followers all tried to create such a drama without success. They tried everything to achieve it for many years, but their efforts did not reach far enough. Finally, I created a drama the world has not yet seen, a drama which is infused with the powerful sound which vibrates throughout the entire cosmos:

Arelena**! Arelena! ARELENA!**